

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF  
AL-FÂRÂBÎ AND THE BRETHREN OF PURITY**

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto.

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## **THESIS ABSTRACT**

### **A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE POLITICAL THEORIES OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ AND THE BRETHREN OF PURITY**

by

Ola Abdelaziz Abouzeid

This dissertation is a comparative study in fourth/tenth century Islamic political philosophy. It undertakes a comparison between the political thought of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), the philosophical figure who dominated the first half of this century, and the political ideas of a group of popular philosophers known as the Brethren of Purity, who flourished in the second half of the same century. Although both al-Fārābī and the Brethren avoid referring to fourth/tenth century individuals or events, their thought has to be understood as a reaction to the political malaise of this turbulent century.

Al-Fārābī was the founder and first systematic exponent of political philosophy in Islam. Although there are problems regarding the number, authenticity and chronology of his works, as well as disagreements among modern scholars in interpreting his thought, his political philosophy has, by and large, been well researched. This cannot be said about the Brethren of Purity. For one thing, the researcher faces greater problems, not only regarding the composition of the Epistles in which they express their thought, but also in establishing their very identity. Secondly, their Epistles have been studied as a compendium

of scientific, philosophical and mystical knowledge, but their political ideas have received scant attention.

In making this comparison, the study had to address itself to questions relating to the composition, authenticity, authorship and dating of the works of the thinkers studied. These questions are thus discussed in chapters one, three and four. The exposition of the political thought of al-Fārābī and the Brethren, as well as the philosophical setting in which their thought is expounded, is contained in chapters two, five and six. The final chapter is devoted to the comparison of the two systems of thought.

Resemblances between the political ideas of al-Fārābī and the Brethren have been alluded to by scholars, but their significance has been greatly exaggerated. The thrust of this study is to show that, notwithstanding some similarities, the political ideas of al-Fārābī and the Brethren are far from being identical: they stem from two entirely different perspectives, one philosophical, the other basically religious.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASQ	Arab Studies Quarterly
BEO	Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales
BFA	Bulletin of the Faculty of Art. Cairo University
EI <sup>1</sup>	Encyclopaedia of Islam. Old Edition
EI <sup>2</sup>	Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition
FM	Fuṣūl Muntaza‘ah. Selected Aphorisms (al-Fārābī)
IC	Islamic Culture
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
IQ	Islamic Quarterly
IS	Islamic Studies
JA	Journal Asiatique
JHI	Journal of the History of Ideas
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSAI	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
KH	Kitāb al-Ḥurūf. Book of Letters (al-Fārābī)
KM	Kitāb al-Millāh. Book of Religion (al-Fārābī)
MW	Muslim World
PR	Political Regime. Al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyah (al-Fārābī)
REI	Revue des Etudes Islamiques
RIS	Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’. Epistles of the Brethren of Purity
RJ	Al-Risālah al-Jāmi‘ah. The Comprehensive Epistle
SI	Studia Islamica
TS	Tahṣīl al-Sa‘ādah. Attainment of Happiness (al-Fārābī)
VC	Arā’ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah. The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City (al-Fārābī)
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft

## INTRODUCTION

### I The Aim of the Study

In the history of medieval Arabic thought, the first half of the fourth/tenth century was dominated by the towering figure of the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). Logician, commentator, metaphysician and musical theorist, he was also the founder and first systematic exponent of political philosophy in Islam. The second half of this century witnessed the flourishing of a group of thinkers known as Ikhwān al-Safā', the Brethren of Purity<sup>1</sup> (hereafter referred to as "the Brethren"), whose thought was expounded in their encyclopaedic work Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'<sup>2</sup> the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (hereafter referred to as "the Epistles"). Interspersed in these Epistles are political ideas which, when extracted from the various contexts in which they occur, form an identifiable political perspective.

The purpose of this study is to compare al-Fārābī's political philosophy with the political ideas of the Brethren. This, it is hoped, will shed light on their respective political theories. It is also hoped that it will give us insight into the way certain intellectuals viewed politics in a century that was politically turbulent, but which at the same time was culturally one of the most creative in medieval times.

The political thought of al-Fārābī has been given due attention by modern scholars. This does not mean that his political works do not pose interpretative problems or that there is consent among scholars regarding them. But, by and

large, these works are well researched. This cannot be said of the political ideas of the Brethren. Ever since nineteenth-century scholars like A. Sprenger, G. Flügel and F. Dieterici showed interest in the Epistles, this work has attracted the attention of scholars. Without minimizing our indebtedness to the pioneer investigations of these and other scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we can say that they tended to concentrate either on translating sections from the Epistles or on raising the issue of the identity of their authors, without delving deeply into a study of the content of the Epistles.<sup>3</sup>

More recent research has tended to concentrate on such areas of knowledge in the Epistles as cosmology, astronomy, mathematics or mysticism.<sup>4</sup> Studies devoted to the political ideas expressed in the Epistles are very scarce.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, these studies, scanty as they are, lack either a comprehensive treatment or an analysis pertaining to the theoretical aspect of the Brethren's political ideas. To be sure, Y. Marquet has studied the idea of imamate in the Epistles.<sup>6</sup> But setting aside the question of whether one agrees or disagrees with his conclusions, the political aspect of his treatment remains incomplete. Again I.R. al-Farūqī has made a serious study of the Brethren's ethics.<sup>7</sup> But, although the Brethren's ethics certainly relate to their political ideas, they do not constitute a political philosophy. A recent article by H. Enayat comes closer to treating their political ideas.<sup>8</sup> But, useful as it is, the article provides a mere outline. A more comprehensive attempt at studying the Brethren's political theory is the work of M.F. Hijāb.<sup>9</sup> The problem with this study is that it is premised on the view that the Brethren preceded al-Fārābī, that they were Ismā'īlīs, that they were deeply involved in active

politics and that they produced a programme for political action which aimed at securing them political power by overthrowing the existing political regime. This view clearly colours the author's interpretation, as it emphasizes practical politics, touching very superficially on the issues related to political theory.<sup>10</sup> As we shall argue in detail, Hijāb's view of the identity and dating of the Epistles is erroneous, and hence his analysis collapses.

No less serious than this deficiency in the studies devoted to the political content of the Epistles is the absence of a proper comparative study of the political thought of the Brethren and that of al-Fārābī. This is a serious shortcoming because they both belonged to the same century and their political ideas represent a response to the malaise of this century in an attempt to diagnose the ills of the society and to prescribe the remedy. To be sure, some modern scholars have noticed some striking similarities between some of the political statements of al-Fārābī and the Brethren. But their remarks and discussions leave much to be desired. Thus, for example, S. Pines remarks that the Brethren "closely follow and indeed plagiarize the political theory of al-Fārābī."<sup>11</sup> He does not, however, elaborate on this. Similarly, though less assertively, R. Walzer -- again without offering any explanation -- states that al-Fārābī's writings left their impact on the Epistles.<sup>12</sup> Hijāb, on the other hand, maintains, in passing, that al-Fārābī came after the Brethren and that he was greatly influenced by them.<sup>13</sup> Marquet and A. Hamdani also point out the resemblances between some of the political statements of al-Fārābī and the Brethren. They, however, hold that they are due to either a common oral or written source used by both.<sup>14</sup>

Hence, while these two latter scholars admit to the similarities in al-Fārābī's and the Brethren's political ideas, they, in effect, deny any kind of direct influence between al-Fārābī and the Brethren.

These resemblances are very important, particularly, as we shall see, when it comes to the question of dating the Epistles. They are also important for comparative purposes. But, as we shall point out, these resemblances are relatively few and far from reflecting any identity between the political views of al-Fārābī and the Brethren. On the contrary -- and this is the main thrust of our argument which we will show in detail -- the political ideas of the two belong to entirely different philosophical perspectives.

The initial attempt to undertake such a study was hampered by textual, historical and philosophical interpretative problems which had to be settled first. But, before outlining the structural plan of the thesis and indicating the place of these problems in it, it is best to discuss the fourth/tenth century milieu in which the political ideas of al-Fārābī and the Brethren appeared. This is because philosophers, particularly those concerned with politics, do not live in a void. Thus, despite the universalist approach of al-Fārābī in his political writings (where he avoids any reference to particular historical facts), the very fact that he appeared as a political philosopher without antecedents, in the real sense of the word, in medieval Islam,<sup>15</sup> strengthens the speculation, as M. Mahdi suggests, that his political writings are the outcome of a deep dissatisfaction with the prevailing political situation and with the existing intellectual approach to it.<sup>16</sup> Although the Brethren also avoid referring to contemporary historical

figures and particular events, their dismay regarding the historical circumstances surrounding them is evident. Their Epistles abound with references to the political, economical, ideological and moral bankruptcy of their era. Their deep sensitivity to the evils of their time is the main reason, as they themselves declare, for their writing of the Epistles.<sup>17</sup>

A detailed study of the fourth/tenth century is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is, however, necessary to outline the main political, economic and cultural features of this century in order to put al-Fārābī and the Brethren in their historical context.

## II The Fourth/Tenth Century Historical Setting

### A. Introducing the Fourth/Tenth Century:

The Islamic world in the fourth/tenth century was politically and religiously divided. Spain, which was excluded from the Abbasid state only seven years after its establishment in 132/750, was still an Umayyad state opposed to the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>18</sup> North Africa saw the rise of the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimid caliphate in Ifriqiyah in the early years of this century (297/909),<sup>19</sup> which challenged not merely the political power of the Abbasids in Baghdād, but the very legitimacy of their claim to the caliphate. A few years after 'Ubayd Allāh assumed the dignity of the caliphate in Ifriqiyah, the Umayyad 'Abd al-Rahmān III of Cordova adopted the title of Caliph in 316/929.<sup>20</sup> The result was the coexistence of three claimants to the caliphate.



It is true that the Umayyads of Spain had long ceased to be a threat to the Abbasids, and the indications are that 'Abd al-Rahmān III adopted the title more as a reaction to the Fāṭimids than as a challenge to the Abbasids.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that three rulers claimed the caliphate is indicative of the political and religious division in the Islamic world of the time.

The rise of Ismā'īlism is of particular relevance to our study for two main reasons. The first is the existence of a theory that the Brethren were Ismā'īlīs. As we shall argue, this theory is untenable. Nonetheless, as we shall point out, the Brethren were eclectic and included Ismā'īlī ideas in their Epistles. The second reason has to do with understanding some of the political problems with which the Abbasids were faced in the tenth century. Not only did the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimids challenge the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate, but they were also able to deprive it of Egypt in 358/969, and for a period, parts of Syria. Closer to home another branch of Ismā'īlism, the Qarmāṭians, threatened the heart of the Abbasid empire itself, that is, Iraq. It has also been suggested by modern scholars that the Brethren were Qarmāṭians.<sup>22</sup> For this reason some comment on the rise of this movement and the threat it posed is in order.

To understand the Ismā'īlī movement, one has to go back to the Abbasid revolution and the disillusion of the Shī'ites with the new caliphate, as the latter excluded them from power.<sup>23</sup> Rebellions of the descendants of 'Alī through al-Ḥasan were crushed, the most prominent of these being the revolts of "Muḥammad the pure soul" and his brother Ibrāhīm.<sup>24</sup> It was the Ḥusaynid branch that ultimately proved more effective, reviving certain messianic ideas first encountered

in the earliest of the Shī'ite revolutions against the Umayyads, that of al-Mukhtār.<sup>25</sup>

This tendency towards messianism (or Mahdism) became a developed ideology and theology in the respective rival branches of Ḥusaynid Shī'ism, that is the Twelvers and the Ismā'īlīs. The basic doctrine shared by both branches was that ultimately a descendant of 'Alī through al-Ḥusayn will come to power and bring justice to the world. The disagreement between the two has to do with the descendant of al-Ḥusayn through whom salvataion will come about. Thus, the turning point in the history of the Ḥusaynid branch of Shī'ism relates to the question of the successor of Ja'far al-Šādiq, the fifth imām, who died in 148/765. The twelvers insist that it was his son Mūsā al-Kāzim, whereas the Ismā'īlīs maintain that the succession should be in the line of his elder son Ismā'il.<sup>26</sup> The general Ismā'īlī account (although on this point there are disagreements among the Ismā'īlīs themselves<sup>27</sup>) is that Ismā'il died before his father; hence, they argue that the succession should go to Ismā'il's son.

Muhammad son of Ismā'il (ca. 193/808-09), in order to escape Abbasid pursuit, is said to have left Medina for Kufa and then travelled to the eastern provinces. He and his descendants, "the hidden imāms," concealed themselves so that little is known about them. By the end of the third/ninth century, the Syrian town of Salamiyah near Ḥimṣ formed a base for the Ismā'īlī movement. During this period Ismā'īlī ideology was spread and converts were made.<sup>28</sup> What is of special concern to us here is that a mythology was developed. There is, however, no evidence of a philosophical system in this early period. Thus, for this reason

and other reasons we will be discussing later, the claim that the Epistles were composed by an Ismā'īlī imām or some of his dā'īs in this early period has very little to support it.

After a century of secret propaganda, the movement came into the open towards the end of the third/ninth century and achieved a series of political successes. Its first political success was in the Yemen where the dā'ī Ibn Ḥawshab, also known as Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, established himself as an independent ruler in a number of fortresses around 270/883.<sup>29</sup> Soon after this, starting from 277/890 another group of Ismā'īlīs under the leadership of Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ exercised control in Kufa, while his disciple Zakrūyeh established himself in the Syrian desert.<sup>30</sup> A third branch founded a base in Bahrain under the leadership of Abu Sa'īd al-Jannābī around 286/899.<sup>31</sup>

The Qarmaṭian branch of Ismā'īlism was to pose, as we shall see, an immediate danger to the Abbasids, particularly in the first half of the tenth century, threatening and disrupting the life of metropolitan centres. Although Ismā'īlīs, they split with the Fāṭimids in the year 286/899, maintaining that the claim of the then Ismā'īlī leader and future Fāṭimid Caliph 'Ubayd Allah to be the expected Mahdī, the hidden-imām, was false.<sup>32</sup> 'Ubayd Allah himself, trying to escape the Abbasid pursuit, left his base in Salamiyah and went to North Africa where, with the help of the Kutāmah Berber tribe, he established the new Fāṭimid dynasty in Ifriqiyah in 297/909.

It is, however, the state of affairs in the heart of the Abbasid empire in Iraq that concerns us most. This is because al-Fārābī lived most of his life

in Baghdād, while the Brethren were active in both Baṣrah and Baghdād.<sup>33</sup> Beginning with the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-32), we witness a period of internal disintegration of the caliphate which affected life in all its aspects. To understand what happened in the tenth century, we must, however, go back to certain crucial events in the ninth century.

A turning point in the history of the Abbasid caliphate came about with the rule of al-Mu'taṣim (218-27/833-42). This caliph was a military man and his power lay in his command of the Turkish soldiers whom he introduced into the army and who were personally loyal to him.<sup>34</sup> This corps of soldiers, many of whom, but not all, were slaves, were skilled professionals whose allegiance and interest lay with the caliph. Partly due to a conflict between these soldiers and the people of Baghdād, including the abnā' (i.e. the descendants of the original Khurasānī forces that supported the Abbasid revolution), he moved them to a new capital, Samarrā.<sup>35</sup>

Although al-Mu'taṣim used these forces to good effect in quelling serious rebellions such as those of Bābāk and Maziār and in fighting the Byzantines,<sup>36</sup> the consequences of his army policies were predictable. The office of the caliph became dependent on the army.

The full implications of this were felt with al-Mu'taṣim's son, al-Mutawakkil (232-47/847-61) who attempted to diminish the caliphal dependance on the forces. When, finally, in pursuing this policy, he sought to take back the land grant (iqṭā') of the Turkish military leader Waṣif, he was assassinated in 247/861.<sup>37</sup> The nine years that followed were a period of anarchy at Samarrā where the

army was in control, making and unmaking the caliphs. Four different caliphs were put into office by the army during this period, three of whom were later displaced either by assassination or deposition.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the office of wazīr was held, for the first time, by a Turkish military leader, namely Utamish during the reign of al-Musta'īn (248-52/862-66).<sup>39</sup>

This period of chaos encouraged the process of the empire's fragmentation which had already begun. In Persia, the Saffārids, who started their activities in 247/861 when Ya'qūb ibn Layth seized Zaranj, the capital of Sistān, formed a new state.<sup>40</sup> By 259/873 they had displaced the Ṭahirids, thus disrupting the control exercised by the Abbasid-Ṭahirid partnership in Iran,<sup>41</sup> then started threatening Baghdād itself in 262/876.<sup>42</sup> In the west, Egypt came under the rule of the new dynasty of the Ṭulūnids in 254/868.<sup>43</sup> Although a member of the Turkish army who was sent by the Abbasids as their governor, Aḥmad ibn Tulūn profited from the anarchy at Samarrā by breaking away, and becoming for all intents and purposes an independent ruler, though theoretically paying allegiance to the Abbasids.<sup>44</sup>

The anarchy at Samarrā also allowed certain sections of the population to show their discontent by breaking out in open revolt. Thus, we find in this period the very serious revolt of the Zanj in southern Iraq. These were mostly black slaves who worked the land under very harsh conditions. The adventurer, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, led them into revolt in 255/869.<sup>45</sup> Joined by many bedouin tribes, the rebels were able to attack and loot Baṣrah in 257/871.<sup>46</sup> 'Alī ibn Muḥammad's control spread over Wāṣit and much of al-Ahwāz and he established

a formidable military state, with its capital al-Mukhtārah, in the marshes of southern Mesopotamia.<sup>47</sup> The political message of ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad, namely that the oppressed were going to be free and their oppressors were going to suffer, led to the participation of non-slaves in the revolution.<sup>48</sup> This explains, in part, the organized nature of the revolt and its effectiveness. The central government was hampered in its attempt to put down the rebellion because it was engaged at the same time in fighting the Ṣaffārīds and Qarmāṭians, and in attempting to ward off the encroachment of Ibn Ṭulūn.<sup>49</sup> It took the government fourteen years to quell the revolt.

Despite the political break-up, the internal revolts and the rising power of the army, the central government was, however, able to revive after the death of al-Muhtadī (255-56/869-70). This was largely due to the personality and energy of al-Muwaffaq, the brother of the caliph al-Mu‘tamid (256-79/870-92). Like his grandfather, the caliph-warrior al-Mu‘tāsīm, al-Muwaffaq was a military man. He succeeded in winning the allegiance of the Turkish Samarran forces and in controlling them.<sup>50</sup> He was able to defeat the Ṣaffārīds when they threatened Baghdād in 262/876.<sup>51</sup> When Ya‘qūb died in 265/879, his son ‘Amr came to an agreement with the Abbasids.<sup>52</sup> A similar accommodation was reached with the Ṭulūnids of Egypt when a campaign to retake it in 270/884 failed.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, through a systematic and lengthy campaign, al-Muwaffaq was able to bring the Zanj revolt to an end in 270/883.<sup>54</sup> One result of the campaign against the Zanj was that al-Muwaffaq moved with his army from Samarrā to Baghdād making it the headquarters of his operations. He remained there with the army after

the revolt was suppressed, while al-Mu'tamid continued to live in Samarrā. When al-Mu'tamid died in 279/892, one year after al-Muwaffaq's death, al-Mu'taḍid, al-Muwaffaq's son, became caliph and Baghdād was once again the capital.<sup>55</sup>

Al-Mu'taḍid (279-89/892-902) and his successor al-Muktafi (289-95/902-08) were able rulers who restored much of the power of the office of the caliph, gaining the allegiance of the army. Being military men, they personally took part in the campaigns. Like his father, al-Mu'taḍid was an able diplomat who knew how to use compromise where force proved unworkable. A combination of diplomacy and military action won Qinnasrīn and al-'Awaṣim (all Syria north of Ḥims) back from the Ṭulūnids.<sup>56</sup> More important is that gradual yet systematic attempts to introduce economic and social reform were initiated. Thus, for example, the reconstruction of Baghdād was begun on his orders after he moved back there, the bed of the Dujayl canal was excavated and the expenses were collected from the owners of estates that would benefit from it, and the collection of the kharāj was delayed until after the harvest.<sup>57</sup> When al-Mu'taḍid came to power there was no reserve in the central treasury,<sup>58</sup> but when he died he left a considerable surplus.<sup>59</sup> The caliph al-Muktafi followed in the footsteps of his father al-Mu'taḍid. The army was kept under control and he successfully used it in crushing the Ṭulunids and in subduing Egypt and the rest of Syria in 292/905.<sup>60</sup> Again the central treasury was full; ten million dīnārs were in it when he died.<sup>61</sup>

A most serious danger, however, following closely upon the crushing of the Zanj revolt, faced the regime in this period of revival. This was the Qarmāṭians. They posed a threat in Kūfa, but more so in the Syrian desert, particularly when

they allied themselves with the Kalb tribe in 289/902.<sup>62</sup> Al-Mu'taḍid was able to keep them under control by crushing a series of minor rebellions.<sup>63</sup> But with al-Muktafi, the danger became very serious when they defeated the Abbasid forces and started threatening Aleppo and Damascus.<sup>64</sup> A major expedition in 290/903 defeated them.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, they continued raiding the Syrian and Iraqi cities bordering on the desert until in 294/907 a series of decisive victories caused them to disperse.<sup>66</sup> From then on, the main Qarmaṭian threat came mostly from the south, from the region of Bahrain.

Ironically, it is when the caliphate seemed to be reviving that the collapse came. The new caliph placed on the throne after al-Muktafi was his brother, the thirteen year old al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-32), an inexperienced youth who was manipulated by the wazīrs and the army. Tenth-century Abbasid history in the eastern provinces divides into two periods that more or less coincide with the years which al-Fārābī spent in Baghdād (al-Fārābī left Baghdād in 330/941) and the flourishing of the Brethren and the completion of their Epistles by the seventies of the fourth/eighties of the tenth century. The first part begins with the death of al-Muktafi (295/908) and ends with the coming of the Buwayhids to power in Baghdād (334/946); and the second part starts with the advent of the Buwayhid rule and goes to the end of the reign of the Buwayhid ruler Aḡud al-Dawlah (372/983).



**B. Iraq From 295/908 to 334/946:**

The authority the Abbasid rulers regained under al-Muwaffaq, al-Mu'taḍid and al-Muktafi came to an end during al-Muqtadir's disastrous twenty-five year reign. The army once again gained power, sometimes allying itself with the bureaucracy, sometimes competing with it.<sup>67</sup> The bureaucracy itself, represented by the wazīrs, was far from being united. The court was rife with rivalries between members of such families as Banū al-Furāt and Banū al-Jarrāh from which wazīrs were usually recruited.<sup>68</sup>

Despite an increase in revenue during al-Muqtadir's reign as a result of the reconquest of Fārs and the good administration of Egypt,<sup>69</sup> the central government was in a state of continuous financial crisis. This was due to a costly military establishment which had to be paid monthly and the growing luxury of the court, which meant lavish caliphal expenses paid for by public funds.<sup>70</sup> The crucial problem, for a government that was always short of money, of meeting the fiscal demands of the court and the army was solved by measures that, in the long term, lead to greater reductions in revenue. Thus, a decrease in the amount of money directed towards irrigation projects and the digging of canals was one way to economize. But this ultimately led to a decrease in agricultural production and, hence, state income.<sup>71</sup> More serious still was the granting of lands to military officers. It is true that these iqṭā'as (which were to become far more prevalent, as we shall see, in the Buwayhid period) were not hereditary and were assigned to the grantee only as long as he held the office,<sup>72</sup> but, because the tenure of the officers was insecure, the military grantees tried to extract as

much benefit as possible before losing their grant.<sup>73</sup> It is true also that the granting of iqṭāʿs was practised earlier, but was usually used in the outlying provinces and as a measure to settle the problems of these areas. By the time of al-Muqtadir, however, iqṭāʿ was made in the heartlands of the empire and as an alternative for paying the soldiers in currency.<sup>74</sup>

This unsettled administrative and economic scene was aggravated by the renewed threat of the Qarmaṭians, this time from Bahrain. From 311/923, the Qarmaṭians began to raid Iraq. In this year, they entered and sacked Baṣrah and in the following year they attacked a caravan of pilgrims returning from Mecca.<sup>75</sup> This infuriated the people of Baghdād who held the government impotent. Riots in the streets of Baghdād led to a military take-over and the execution of the then wazīr Ibn al-Furāt.<sup>76</sup> Slowly, but surely, the military continued to gain power over the civilian bureaucrats. The Qarmaṭian threat to Iraq and their raids on the caravans of pilgrims continued, leading to the fall of one wizarate after another.<sup>77</sup> An attempt by the wazīr al-Khaṣībī to face the threat by seeking the help of the Aḏarbayjān ruler Yūsuf ibn Abī al-Sāj in 314/926<sup>78</sup> proved to be a complete disaster. Not only was he defeated and killed by the Qarmaṭians who, in the following year, started pressing towards Baghdād itself,<sup>79</sup> but more serious than this was the granting of all the Iranian provinces except Fārs to Ibn Abī al-Sāj as an iqṭāʿ in exchange for his services, since there was no liquid money in the treasury to pay him.<sup>80</sup> In 317/930 the Qarmaṭians sacked Mecca and removed the black stone<sup>81</sup> thus directing a serious blow to the prestige of the caliph al-Muqtadir. This caliph, at various stages of his rule, had differences

with the Turkish chief commander Mu'nis. In a final military confrontation between the two in 320/932 the caliph was killed.<sup>82</sup>

The death of al-Muqtadir ushered in a new period of anarchy, reminiscent of the period that followed the murder of al-Mutawakkil. This time, however, the decline was so great that there was no recovery, at least in the period under examination. The military take-over gained momentum and the caliphs were made and unmade by the military leaders. Thus, al-Qāhir (320-22/932-34) was chosen by them as caliph<sup>83</sup> and, although he succeeded in getting rid of the powerful military leader Mu'nis,<sup>84</sup> he himself was deposed and blinded in 322/934 and al-Rāḍī (322-29/934-40), his successor, was put into office by the army.<sup>85</sup>

By this time the political and economic situation had reached a very low ebb. The fragmentation of the Abbasid realm continued with new dynasties and commanders becoming quite independent. Thus, for example, by the year 324/936, Egypt and Syria were under the power of the Turkish Ikhshīdis, Mūṣil and Jazīrah under the Arab Ḥamdānid dynasty, while many of the eastern provinces were in the process of coming under the control of the rising dynasty of the Daylamite Buwayhids.<sup>86</sup> In Iraq itself the family of the Barīdīs, who for years had been tax farming vast areas in Southern Iraq and al-Ahwāz, rose to power and frequently withheld revenues from the area. In Wāṣit, Ibn Rā'iq, the military general, refused to pay any revenue to Baghdad.<sup>87</sup> Instead of sending an expedition against him, the caliph al-Rāḍī invited Ibn Rā'iq in 324/936 to come to Baghdad and take over the entire administration. The position of amīr al-umarā' was created and the civil and military administration had been merged.<sup>88</sup> The office

of the wazīr was then practically paralyzed as all power was now in the hands of amīr al-umarāʾ. The Dīwāns were abandoned and all the revenues were sent to the treasury of Ibn Rāʾiq and his secretary.<sup>89</sup>

The ten years that followed were a period of confusion that saw a growing struggle for power among different groups. Thus, the Barīdīs, who aspired to control Iraq, began to negotiate with Aḥmad ibn Buwayh, encouraging him to move on to Baghdād.<sup>90</sup> Further north, the Ḥamdānids of Mūsīl and Jazīrah were gaining power. The caliph al-Muttaqī (329-33/940-44) sought their help in 330/941 when the struggle between the Barīdīs and the military leader Ibn Rāʾiq led to the sacking of Baghdād by al-Barīdī in that year. The caliph bestowed the office of amīr al-umarāʾ on the Ḥamdānid Nāṣir al-Dawlah which he held for a short time.<sup>91</sup>

The looting of Baghdād by al-Barīdī's troops is of special interest to us because it took place in the same year that al-Fārābī left Baghdād. The havoc wrought by the troops of al-Barīdī is described by Ibn Miskawayh and more vividly by Ibn al-Athīr who tell us that the troops looted, confiscated beasts of burden and the goods of the merchants, and occupied homes, evicting their inhabitants; that this was followed by an astronomical rise in the price of food and by disagreements and fights, not only among the troops, but also among the common people themselves who supported one faction of the troops or the other, and also between the troops and the commonality.<sup>92</sup>

Ibn al-Athīr also tells us that after this incident many people began to leave Baghdād.<sup>93</sup> We have no indication whether al-Fārābī left Baghdād before

or after this incident. Thus, we do not know whether his departure was a result of al-Barīdī's occupation of Baghdād or not, but this is not improbable.<sup>94</sup>

In 334/946, the ambitious Ahmad ibn Buwayh took advantage of the political collapse of the central government and entered Baghdād. He was received by the caliph al-Mustakfi (333-34/944-46), who gave him the title Mu'izz al-Dawlah and the office of amīr al-umārā'.<sup>95</sup> Hence, the Buwayhid dynasty of Baghdād was established, although their power was by no means confined to Iraq.<sup>96</sup>

#### C. Iraq From 334/946 to 372/983:

The Buwayhids inherited the economic and political problems of the central government in Baghdād. Although the deterioration was not new, the process of decay gained momentum under their rule, despite the personal efforts of some rulers like 'Adud al-Dawlah (ruled Baghdād 367-72/978-83). Two main features of the Buwayhid period in Baghdād proved to be factors that accelerated decay. The first was their military establishment and the destructive land policies related to it. The second was their encouragement of sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shi'is.

Turning first to the military establishment, the Buwayhids were Daylamites who were trained as foot soldiers and who needed cavalry units to supplement their forces. When Mu'izz al-Dawlah (334-56/946-67) entered Baghdād, he began recruiting the existing Turkish soldiers trained as cavalry. Hence, the main body of the Buwayhid army in Baghdād consisted of Daylamites and Turks.<sup>97</sup> The feuds and jealousies between these two groups led to repeated uprisings and struggles

which plagued Baghdad.<sup>98</sup> Faced with the empty treasury inherited from earlier misrule, Mu'izz al-Dawlah, in order to avoid possible uprisings among his soldiers, granted them iqṭā'as as a substitute for their salary payment (rizq).<sup>99</sup> This was the beginning of an ever increasing dependence on this type of payment. By the time of Jalāl al-Dawlah (416-35/1025-44), the lands around Baghdad had all been given as military iqṭā'as.<sup>100</sup>

The granting of lands did not solve the problem of the soldiers' discontent, mainly because the lands yielded inadequate revenues.<sup>101</sup> In a land like Iraq, where the economy is based on agriculture, the system of irrigation and land conservation were crucial.<sup>102</sup> Decades of neglect and abuse now reached their logical conclusion. This ushered in a continuous series of uprisings and complaints among the soldiers asking for more iqṭā'as. Because of the growing shortage of lands available for granting, Mu'izz al-Dawlah confiscated the crown lands.<sup>103</sup> The Buwayhids even went so far as to confiscate the waqf land and to grant iqṭā'as from it.<sup>104</sup> In fact, the Buwayhid amīr replaced the caliph as the main distributor of iqṭā'as.<sup>105</sup>

The granting of iqṭā'as reduced further the tax base available to the government. It led to a reduction in revenue, that is in currency, and hence the granting of further iqṭā'as to pay the soldiery. A vicious circle ensued. Moreover, there were abuses. In theory, the iqṭā'as given to the soldiers was non-hereditary. It was an assignment of the revenue of the land instead of a salary, and was thus tied to the office held.<sup>106</sup> (This is known as iqṭā'as istighlāl)<sup>107</sup> as opposed to iqṭā'as tamlik which was hereditary and gave the grantee the right to own the servitude of the granted land.<sup>108</sup>) If the grantee died, his iqṭā'as did not

pass to his children, who received a pension instead.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the soldier, in return for his iqṭāʿ, had to pay to the government either an amount of money or a portion of the crop. He also was supposed to look after the land and the irrigation system on it. In addition, he had no judicial right over the peasants on his iqṭāʿ.<sup>110</sup> In practice, however, he did not pay anything to the treasury and kept no records of revenue from his iqṭāʿ.<sup>111</sup> Proper governmental supervision was absent with the result that the military holders oppressed the peasants who fled the land while the original owners were forced to give their lands to the military.<sup>112</sup> This was known as iljāʿ.<sup>113</sup> The practical result was that the military land grantee began treating his iqṭāʿ istighlāl as iqṭāʿ tamlik.

More serious still is the fact that, unlike the original land owner, the military land grantee was an absentee landlord who sent his agents to collect the revenue, caring little about land conservation and the irrigation system on which it depended. When the land was ruined and hence ceased to yield the desired income, the soldier land grantee would rebel forcing the government to give him a new iqṭāʿ.<sup>114</sup>

The destruction of the land was one of the main reasons for the recurring famines during the Buwayhid rule. The early sources reported a substantial drop in crop production during the Buwayhid period in general.<sup>115</sup> Reports of many breakages in the dams that led to devastating floods are also given.<sup>116</sup> Thus, social unrest, widespread poverty and pillaging of merchants were common scenes.<sup>117</sup> The continuous practice of iqṭāʿ and the reluctance of the land grantees to pay their dues led to serious loss of income and the Buwayhids began searching

for other sources of currency. Thus, they resorted to confiscation which extended more than ever before to agricultural land. Under the Buwayhids, diwān al-muṣāḍarāt, that is, the diwān of expropriation or confiscation became one of the most important diwāns. Our original sources are full of examples of the Buwayhid confiscation of the properties of wazīrs, merchants and senior civil servants.<sup>118</sup> This extended to the caliphs themselves when Bahā' al-Dawlah confiscated the iqṭā' of the caliph al-Ṭā'i' (363-81/974-91).<sup>119</sup>

Although certain Buwayhid rulers, namely Mu'izz al-Dawlah and 'Aḍud al-Dawlah, were able to see the importance of the irrigation system to agriculture in Iraq and initiated irrigation projects and reforms themselves, their efforts were counteracted by the destructive policy of giving iqṭā'.<sup>120</sup> The use of iqṭā' remained extensive, unsupervised and corrupt. These rulers were either unwilling or unable to remedy the economic crisis by undertaking long-term measures such as reducing the military establishment or breaking the vicious circle of granting iqṭā's and going back to the old system of direct taxation.<sup>121</sup>

The second main cause of disturbances during the Buwayhid period was the rise of sectarian strife between Sunnis and Shi'is with the result that Baghdad came to be practically divided into strictly Sunni and Shi'i quarters. It is true that the status of 'Alī was always a major source of intellectual controversy among the Muslims of Iraq. It is also true that tensions between Sunnis and Shi'is existed in Iraq before the coming of the Buwayhids and can be seen in some reports of al-Muqtadir's and al-Rāḍī's reigns.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, indications are that the Sunnis and Shi'is developed into two extremely hostile,



irreconcilable, militant camps only in Buwayhid Baghdād.

The Buwayhids themselves, being Daylamites, were converted to Islam by 'Alid missionaries.<sup>123</sup> From his arrival in Baghdād, Mu'izz al-Dawlah associated himself with the Shī'ī cause (but not Ismā'īlī Shī'ism), thus allowing and encouraging the development of the Shī'ī point of view. Thus, for example, in 351/962 he ordered the curses on the first two caliphs to be painted on the walls in Baghdād<sup>124</sup> and in 353/964 he encouraged the celebration of exclusive Shī'ī feasts like Ghadīr Khum and the mourning of al-Ḥusayn.<sup>125</sup>

A turning point in the development of the strife came during the reign of Mu'izz al-Dawlah's son 'Izz al-Dawlah Bakhtiyār (356-67/967-78). Bakhtiyār's political struggle with Sabuktakin (not to be confused with Sabuktakīn, founder of the Ghaznawid dynasty), the Turkish military leader, expressed itself in sectarian terms, from 361/972 onward, when the latter succeeded in diverting the enthusiasm of his followers from launching a holy war against the Byzantines to attacking the Buwayhids who were then termed "heretical innovators", mubtadi'ah.<sup>126</sup> Sabuktakin's followers burnt down the Shī'ī quarter of Karkh twice.<sup>127</sup> From the time of this crisis, the split of the Sunnis and Shī'īs into two rival sects, each armed and secluded in fortified quarters, became a permanent feature of the Buwayhid period.<sup>128</sup>

Despite the sincere efforts of 'Adud al-Dawlah to put an end to this sectarian strife by forbidding inflammatory slogans and the celebration of sectarian feasts,<sup>129</sup> the breach continued to broaden. This can be observed particularly after 'Adud al-Dawlah's reign, largely because sectarian conflict was encouraged

for local political reasons.<sup>130</sup> The second half of the fourth/tenth century saw the spread of sectarian tension to other cities like Wasīt.<sup>131</sup> It also witnessed the Sunnis developing their own exclusive feasts -- these celebrations becoming occasions for violence.<sup>132</sup>

Despite their Shi'ī sympathies, the Buwayhids respected the Abbasid Sunni caliphate.<sup>133</sup> But while the institution of the caliphate was respected, the individual caliphs were not. In theory, the Buwayhids were governors for the Abbasid caliphs but, in practice, they reduced the caliph to no more than a symbol, secluded in his palace with no wazīr but only a secretary assigned to him by the Buwayhids.<sup>134</sup> The secretary's task was to look after the iqṭā' they granted the caliph, after confiscating his lands, and which was usually insufficient for his personal needs.<sup>135</sup>

The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity, which were almost completed by the seventies of the fourth/eighties of the tenth century, vividly reflect this gloomy situation. Intermittent references to the economic crisis are to be found in the Epistles. A passage describing the situation of the poor who fall by the roadside hungry and ailing, begging for a chunk of bread or a piece of clothing,<sup>136</sup> depicts the recurring famines and the abject poverty of the period. The widespread use of confiscation and the absence of basic security are constantly mentioned. In one place the Brethren write that the fortunes which the merchants spent their lives amassing vanished by flood, theft or confiscation.<sup>137</sup> The Brethren are highly critical of the absence of moral responsibility towards fellow citizens and attack the hypocrisy and rivalry for mundane political power.<sup>138</sup> They also

criticize the military establishment. In one passage an indirect reference to the ethnic divisions in the army and the Abbasids reliance on non-Arabs is given<sup>139</sup> and in another a criticism of the method of paying them is implied.<sup>140</sup> The Epistles abound with references to the sectarian strife; and the tensions between the followers of one religion are attacked as being evil and sinful.<sup>141</sup> The Brethren advise people to practise tolerance in order to gain salvation.<sup>142</sup> Finally, references in the Epistles to the "caliphs" are quite rare. On the whole, in their discussions of the political leadership, they refer to "kings" and "sultans",<sup>143</sup> an indication of the dwindling power of the office of the caliph in the period in which the Epistles were composed.<sup>144</sup>

### D. The Philosophical Milieu in the Fourth/Tenth Century:

At first glance, it appears to be very paradoxical that a century noted for political decline and periods of internal chaos was at the same time a period of great creativity on the cultural level. This apparent paradox is not limited to the fourth/tenth century, for the period of turbulence following the death of al-Mutawakkil in the third/ninth century was also a creative one. Our concern, however, is with the fourth/tenth century and this cultural effervescence is explainable, in part, in terms of the very fragmentation of the empire.

Fragmentation meant the rise of semi-independent princedoms which were economically viable. Patronage, which in the past tended to be concentrated with the caliphs, their wazirs or rich families associated with the caliphal court, became more widely spread.<sup>145</sup> In addition to the economic viability of these

princedom which allowed the patronage of men of letters, philosophers and scientists, there was a practical concern, as the philosophers quite often were also physicians.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, there was the matter of prestige. Princes and rulers vied with each other in bringing to their courts the leading men of letters, scientists and philosophers. Thus, for example, the Ḥamdānī court in Aleppo attracted to it poets like al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) and thinkers like al-Fārābī,<sup>147</sup> and the Samānids sponsored Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 428/1037) when he began his career.<sup>148</sup>

In the fourth/tenth century in Iraq and elsewhere, it was often the wazīrs who sponsored learning. For example, we know that al-Fārābī dedicated his Great Book of Music (Kitāb al-Musiqā al-Kabīr) to the wazīr al-Karkhī.<sup>149</sup> Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (320-414/932-1023) had Ibn Saʿdān, the wazīr of the Buwayhid prince Šamsām al-Dawlah, as his patron.<sup>150</sup> Abū Faraj al-Isbahānī (284-356/897-967), who was sponsored by the Ḥamdānīs, was also sponsored by al-Muhallabī (d. 352/963), the wazīr of Muʿizz al-Dawlah.<sup>151</sup> (In the Buwayhid period such prose writers as al-Šāḥib ibn ʿAbbad (served the Buwayhids of Rayy from 360/970-71 to 385/995) and Abū al-Faḍl Ibn al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970) were themselves wazīrs.<sup>152</sup>)

This century was certainly one of the most creative in medieval Islam. A. Mez entitled his book on the cultural life of this period as "The Renaissance of Islam".<sup>153</sup> One may object to this designation, since it suggests that the earlier period was culturally barren, which was hardly the case. But at least Mez did draw attention to the creative aspect of the fourth/tenth century. To list the names of literary men, grammarians, historians, geographers, theologians and men

of science without discussing their contributions would be a barren exercise. To discuss their contribution, however, and give it justice, is beyond our scope here. We must concentrate on the development of philosophical thought which is our primary concern.

The rise of Islamic philosophy (and science) was the direct result of the translation movement. This movement which had some of its beginnings in the Umayyad period,<sup>154</sup> properly speaking belongs to the Abbasid. It started sporadically but gained momentum particularly when the caliph al-Ma'mūn (198-218/813-33) gave it official sponsorship, symbolized by his establishment of the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikmah), a centre for translation and scientific activity.<sup>155</sup> Of particular significance to our theme was the work of Ibn Nā'imah al-Himsī (d. 220/835) who translated the so-called Theology of Aristotle.<sup>156</sup> This was a Neo-Platonic work that left an impression on such major philosophers as al-Kindī (d. ca. 252/866) and al-Fārābī, but also on the fourth/tenth century Ismā'īlī philosophers and certainly the Brethren of Purity.

The philosopher who in a real sense introduced philosophy to medieval Islam and whose influence was very strong as evidenced by such histories as those of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990) and Abū Sulaymān al-Mantiqī al-Sijistānī (d. after 391/1000-01) was al-Kindī.<sup>157</sup> He was noted for his insistence on a doctrine of the world's creation ex-nihilo and for his Neo-Platonic concept of God, the True One, as being utterly beyond the world and from whom the world proceeded as an emanation.<sup>158</sup> No less influential, though sometimes in a negative way, was the philosopher-physician Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 313 or

320/925 or 932), criticized by both al-Fārābī and the Ismā'īlī thinkers,<sup>159</sup> but whose influence on the Brethren's cosmology is very evident.

The fourth/tenth century saw the rise of cosmologies, essentially Neo-Platonic in character. To these belong the cosmological systems of both al-Fārābī and the Brethren which we will be discussing in some detail in this thesis. At this point, however, we must note the influence of al-Rāzī's cosmology on the Brethren. For, although not immediately obvious, this influence was significant and affected the Brethren's eschatology and hence their political ideas. To show this, one must consider the essentials of al-Rāzī's cosmology so as to point out that aspect of it that had a fundamental influence on the Brethren.

Al-Rāzī is noted for his doctrine of the five eternal principles: God, soul, absolute space, absolute time and atomic matter. Atomic matter existed in an eternal past in chaos. But at a moment in time, through the exercise of will and choice, God imposed order on this matter. This, for al-Rāzī, was the act of creation of a world which was to endure for a finite period of time. Creation meant the joining of soul to matter forming life in its various forms, vegetable, animal and human. Humans are endowed with reason, an emanation from God. Through reason men are capable of discerning what is right and wrong and, hence, there is no need for revealed religion. Implicit here is a doctrine that all men are capable of such reasoning. In fact, al-Rāzī maintained that at some future date all men will realize, through philosophy, that their souls belong elsewhere. When they realize this they are reabsorbed into the world-soul losing their identity. The world then reverts to its initial state of disorganized atoms.<sup>160</sup>

Two things in al-Rāzī's scheme are significant to the development of cosmologies in the fourth/tenth century. The first is that the Brethren hold a similar view regarding how the world was created and its finitude but more so regarding what the term greater resurrection means in their scheme where all souls are reabsorbed, this time into the active intellect rather than the world-soul. But the idea is the same. This is the main influence of al-Rāzī on the Brethren. Although, as will become evident, some of the details and implications of al-Rāzī's cosmology are not to be found in the Brethren's scheme, this influence is very important. The second is that al-Rāzī stressed an egalitarianism as far as men's talents and capacities are concerned that was totally unacceptable to Ismā'īlī thinkers who insisted on a hierarchical structure of religious leaders culminating in the infallible imam. Thus, we find that Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī (d. 322/933-34) directs his attack on this egalitarian scheme of the physician al-Rāzī with its consequent denial of prophethood.<sup>161</sup> We also find Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. 331/942-43 or after 360/970-71) stressing the notion of precedence (tafāwut).<sup>162</sup>

This brings us to the cosmological schemes of the fourth/tenth century Ismā'īlīs, where this hierarchy is stressed. The two main cosmologies were those of al-Sijistānī and al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020-21). Al-Sijistānī is more Neoplatonically orthodox in that we have a series of beings caused by God consisting of an intellect followed by a world-soul and then the world.<sup>163</sup> With al-Kirmānī, the influence of al-Fārābī is more evident since what is caused by God are the ten intellects and the various spheres.<sup>164</sup> What is of significance to our study

is that, in both these thinkers, the first being that is caused by God is caused as an act of innovation (ibdāʿ), not emanation (fayd). Emanation proceeds from the first created being, the first intellect. This is in contrast with the Brethren's scheme where emanation proceeds from God, but which, nonetheless, does not happen necessarily.<sup>165</sup>

Apart from the development of these cosmologies in the fourth/tenth century, we note in the growth of philosophy in this period two phenomena. The first is advances in philosophy in the very technical sense, that is advances in logic, epistemology, psychology, metaphysics and political theory. The individual most responsible for this was al-Fārābī, a philosophical genius of all time, highly professional, but also innovative and original. The second is not unrelated to this, but exhibits itself in the rise of minor philosophers who, although not of the stature of al-Fārābī, rendered philosophical concepts fairly common at least with certain segments of the educated classes. Both these points require some further comment.

Al-Fārābī's professionalism cannot be considered in isolation from the intellectual milieu in which he lived. The last part of the third/ninth and the first part of the fourth/tenth centuries saw the activities of important Nestorian logicians who represented a continuation of the philosophical and medical school of Alexandria.<sup>166</sup> They undertook, among other things, the translation and study of such important works as Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. It should be noted that some of their activities were carried on in Syriac. Thus, for example, Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī (ca. 235-36/850-308/920) lectured on this work in Syriac and had as



his pupil Abū Bishr Mattā (ca. 256-328/870-940) who translated it into Arabic and wrote a commentary on it, as well as Quwairī, who also wrote a book on it.<sup>167</sup> Al-Fārābī himself studied this work with his teacher, the Nestorian Yuhannā Ibn Haylān (ca. 246-308/860-920).<sup>168</sup> It should also be noted that logio was now being studied in a very professional fashion. To be sure, there was a reaction to its claims of universality by theologians like al-Širāfī, who, in part, resented the still awkward manner in which, at this stage, its doctrines were expressed in Arabic. (It seems that the Arabic of Abū Bishr Mattā left something to be desired.)<sup>169</sup>

But with al-Fārābī, and other logicians, technical logical vocabulary was standardized. The same can be said of other philosophical terms. This helps explain the facility with which later (and lesser) philosophers were able to express philosophical ideas in Arabic. Good examples of this are found in al-Sijistānī's Siwān al-Hikmah, particularly the excerpts quoted from such philosophers as Ibn Miskawayh and Ibn Miqdād.<sup>170</sup>

This last point is quite relevant to the question of dating the Epistles of the Brethren, for these Epistles are noted for the facility with which the philosophical concepts contained in them are expressed. This can only be explained as the result of a long development in the use of philosophical language, inconceivable a century earlier. This is a point to which we will return when discussing the dating of the Epistles.

The Brethren, though quite prolific and versatile (their Epistles cover all branches of philosophical knowledge), belong to the group of minor philosophers.

This, however, does not mean that their work is not central to understanding the intellectual and religious moods of this tortured, complex and yet intellectually creative century.

### III Plan

The thesis is divided into three parts, the first devoted to al-Fārābī, the second to the Brethren, the third to a comparison of the two.

Part I consists of two chapters. The first probes some of the main problems one encounters in the study of al-Fārābī. These include the disparity in the various sources, medieval and modern, regarding the number of his works, the chronology of his main political writings and the substantive question of the relation of his metaphysics to his political philosophy. The second chapter is devoted to al-Fārābī's political thought which has to be studied in terms of his metaphysics, psychology, epistemology and theory of prophethood.

Part II is a study of the thought of the Brethren. It is the longest part of the thesis and consists of four chapters (Chapters Three - Six). Chapter Three examines the question of the number of the Epistles. This is important because there is confusion as to their number, not only in the writings about these works, but in the Epistles themselves. This examination, as with al-Fārābī, is concerned with establishing a reasonable degree of confidence in the authenticity of all the Epistles. This chapter also discusses the indications that a heavy process of re-arrangement of the Epistles took place. This is undertaken in order to discover whether or not the authors in writing the Epistles were following a

well-laid out and systematic plan. Chapter Four is the longest because it deals with two topics that are interrelated. These pertain to the question of the identity of the authors of the Epistles and their dating. Establishing both the date and the identity of the authors is basic to the comparison of their thought with al-Fārābī's, as it involves determining their milieu and their doctrinal affiliation. Chapter Five examines the philosophical context from which their political ideas have to be extracted. It thus examines the cosmology, psychology, epistemology and theory of prophecy of the Brethren. Chapter Six is concerned with their political thought, and with showing that the political ideas they endorse are not concerned so much with bringing into existence an ideal political regime in this world, as with preparing the individual, intellectually and morally, for the spiritual life in the hereafter.

Part III (Chapter Seven) undertakes a detailed comparison between al-Fārābī's political philosophy and the Brethren's political ideas. Since the political thought of both is intimately related to their metaphysics, cosmology and psychology, the comparison begins with these aspects of their respective thought. Their political ideas are then compared and it is argued that the differences in these ideas ultimately stem from two distinct perspectives of the world, one essentially philosophical, the other religious.

## ENDNOTES

1. The designation lkhwān al-Safā' has been understood and hence translated in different ways. The most common translations are: a) "Brethren of Purity". See for example: Stanley Lane-Poole, Brotherhood of Purity (Lahore: National Book Society, 1960), p. 15; R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 370; Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, London: Longman, 1983), pp. 163-181 (hereafter cited as Islamic Philosophy); Ian Richard Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (lkhwān al-Safā') (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 4-6 (hereafter cited as Muslim Neoplatonists); b) "Pure Brethren". See for example: Hamilton A. Gibb, Arabic Literature, 2nd ed., rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 99; c) "Sincere Brethren". See for example: William M. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Islamic Survey, no. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), p. 102; d) "Sincere Friends". See for example: Gustave E. Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 40. A less frequent translation is the "Faithful Companions" or the "Faithful Brethren". See: Geo Widengren, "The Pure Brethren and the Philosophical Structure of Their System," Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge, ed. Alford T. Welch & Pierre Cachia (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), p. 58 (hereafter cited as "Pure Brethren"); T.J. De Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, trans. Edward R. Jones (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1967), pp. 81-96 (hereafter cited as History).

The preference of the term "sincere" was first suggested by Goldziher. Ignaz Goldziher, "Über die Benennung der 'lchwān al-Şafā'," Der Islam 1 (1910):22-26. He bases this on the story of the ring-dove in Kalilah wa Dimnah and which is referred to in the Epistles. See [lkhwān al-Şafā'] Rasā'il lkhwān al-Şafā' wa Khillān al-Wafā', 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Şādir and Dār Beirut, 1957), 1:99-100 (hereafter cited as RIS); another reference to the book Kalilah wa Dimnah also exists, 4:113. The story tells about a ring-dove and

her animal friends who rescue themselves from a hunter's net by coordinating their efforts. The context of the story, hence, suggests that the term "ṣafā'" means sincerity in cooperation, rather than purity. Another interesting suggestion as to the meaning of their name is given by Carra de Vaux. He maintains that the name was inspired by the Greek term "Philo-sophias", that is, love of wisdom and, hence, was intended to mean brother in wisdom. See: B. Carra de Vaux, Les Penseurs de l'Islam, 5 vols. (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1921-26), 4:102, n. 1.

It is true that the Brethren pay great attention to sincerity and mutual help. Moreover, the very important place given to wisdom in their Epistles is undeniable. The Brethren, however, left us clues in the Epistles regarding the meaning of their name. In a significant passage in their al-Risālah al-Jami'ah, they term those who cannot benefit from demonstrative knowledge "Brethren of Turbidity" (Ikhwān al-Kadar), as opposed to the "Brethren of Purity" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'). See Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', al-Risālah al-Jami'ah, 2 vols., edited by Jamil Ṣalībā (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Ṭarraqqī, 1949), 1:717 (hereafter cited as RJ). Elsewhere, they declare that "purity" (ṣafā') is known by and opposed to turbidity" (kadar). RIS, 4:270. They also announce that the men who deserve the title "Brethren of Purity" are those whose minds are pure. RIS, 4:413. Their souls are pure also like a mirror and this purity is achieved when the soul reaches a state of complete tranquility in religious and worldly matters. RIS, 4:411-12. This indicates that "Brethren of Purity" is the most appropriate translation.

2. The whole Arabic text of the Epistles was first published in Bombay in 1305-06 H in four volumes, by Nūr al-Dīn Jiwākhān. Immediately after the publication of this edition an incomplete edition appeared in Cairo in 1306 H. It consists of one volume containing the first of the four sections of the Epistles and an introduction by 'Alī Yūsuf. The second complete edition of the Epistles was published in Cairo in 1928 A.D. It has a separate introduction by Ṭahā Ḥusayn and a concise study about the Epistles by Aḥmad Zakī. The third and last complete edition of the Epistles was published

in Beirut in 1957 with an introduction by Buṭrus al-Bustānī. See A.L. Tibawi, "Ikhwān Aṣ-Ṣafā and their Rasā'il: A critical review of a century and a half of research," IQ 2 (1955):32-33 (hereafter cited as "Critical Review"; Nādiā Jamāl al-Dīn, Falsafat al-Tarbiyah 'Inda Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Cairo: Al-Markaz al-'Arabī li al-Ṣiḥāfah, 1983), pp. 30-31 (hereafter cited as Falsafat al-Tarbiyah). Unless otherwise stated reference in this thesis will be to the Beirut edition.

3. A useful review of the studies devoted to the Brethren and their Epistles during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century is: Tibawi, "Critical Review", pp. 28-46.
4. Examples of these works are: Adel Awa, L'Esprit Critique des "Frères de la Pureté": Encyclopédistes Arabes du IV/X siècle (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1948) (hereafter cited as L'Esprit); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, rev. ed. (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1978) (hereafter cited as Cosmological Doctrines); Yves Marquet, La Philosophie des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā' (Algiers: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1975) (hereafter cited as Les Ikhwān); Susanne Diwald, Arabische Philosophie und Wissenschaft in der Enzyklopädie Kitāb Iḥwān as-Safā' (III): Die Lehre von Seele und Intellekt (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975) (hereafter cited as Arabische Philosophie); Alessandro Bausani, L'Enciclopedia dei Fratelli della Purità (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1978); Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists; Jamāl al-Dīn, Falsafat al-Tarbiyyah. I refer here to the comprehensive studies only, as the articles which treat the Epistles as a compendium of scientific, philosophic, educational and mystical knowledge are quite extensive. Hence, this will be reserved for the Bibliography.
5. These studies are usually limited to a few pages that come in a more general account of the Brethren's thought. A good example of this is found in Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, pp. 163-82. Although he gives the chapter on the Brethren the subtitle: Philosophy, the Handmaid of Politics, there is hardly any

- disoussion of their political ideas proper. See also, Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 239-56; Omar A. Farrūkh, "Ikhwān al-Şafa," in M.M. Sharif, ed., A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 1:305-06.
6. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, pp. 407ff.; Yves Marquet, "Imamat, Résurrection et Hiérarchie selon les Ikhwan as-Safā'," REI 30 (1962):49-142 (hereafter cited as "Imamat").
  7. Isma'īl Rāgī al-Fārūqī, "On the Ethics of the Brethren of Purity," MW 50 (April 1960):109-21, (July 1960):193-98, (October 1960):252-58; 51 (January 1961):18-24 (hereafter cited as "Ethics").
  8. Hamid Enayat, "An Outline of the Political Philosophy of the Rasā'il of the Ikhwān al-Şafā'," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), pp. 25-49 (hereafter cited as "Outline").
  9. Muḥammad Farīd Hījāb, al-Falsafah al-Siyāsiyah 'Inda Ikhwān al-Şafā' (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1982) (hereafter cited as al-Falsafah).
  10. By the issues related to political theory I mean the wide range of ideas relating to the nature of man as a body and a soul, his role in the universe, his relationship to society, the extent to which man's personal endeavours can affect political regimes, the role of the prophets-lawgivers and the permanence or transience of the political regimes -- all this as opposed to the study of issues strictly relating to the Brethren's system of propaganda or the organization of their secret meetings.
  11. S. Pines, "Some Problems of Islamic Philosophy," IC 11 (January 1937):71.
  12. EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "al-Fārābī," by R. Walzer.
  13. Hījāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 46, 191.

14. Abbas Hamdani, "A Comparison of Certain Ideas Concerning Kalām and Political Thought in the Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Ṣafā and al-Fārābī," unpublished paper presented at the 9th annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America at Louisville, November, 1975, p. 2 (hereafter cited as "Comparison"); Marquet, "Imamat," p. 50, n. 2.
15. It is true that one finds in some works of al-Kindī and in the extant writings of al-Rāzī statements that have political implications. But it is only with al-Fārābī that one finds an elaborate, systematic and well worked out political theory.
16. Muhsin Mahdi, "al-Farabi and the Foundation of Islamic Philosophy," in Parviz Morewedge, ed., Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1981), pp. 3-21, especially pp. 14-15, 19-20.
17. See, for example, RIS 2:50-51; 4:186-87, 426.
18. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, 4th ed., edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Dhakhā'ir al-'Arab, no. 30, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1979), 7:500 (hereafter cited as Tārīkh); 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Marrākishī, al-Mu'jib fī Talkhīṣ Akhbār al-Maghrib, 7th ed., edited with an introduction by Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Iryān and Muḥammad al-'Alamī (al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Dār al-Kitāb, 1978), pp. 29-32 (hereafter cited as Mu'jib); Aḥmad Mukhtār al-'Abbādī, Fī al-Tārīkh al-'Abbāsī wa al-Andalusī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1971), pp. 307ff. (hereafter cited as al-Tārīkh al-Andalusī).
19. For the events that preceded and ultimately led to the establishment of the Fāṭimids in Ifriqiyyah, see: al-Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad, Risālat Iftitāḥ al-Da'wah: Risālah fī Zuhūr al-Da'wah al-'Abīdiyyah al-Fāṭimiyyah, ed. Widad al-Qaḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Thiqāfah, 1970), pp. 231ff. (hereafter cited as Iftitāḥ); Taqīy al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz al-Hunafā bi Akhbār al-A'imma al-Fāṭimiyyin al-Khulafā, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, Maktabat al-Maqrīzī al-Ṣaghīrah, no. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1948), pp. 74ff. (hereafter cited as Itti'āz); 'Izz al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn



‘Abd al-Karīm ibn ‘Abd al-Wāhid al-Shaybanī [Alī [Ibn al-Athīr], al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣadīr lī al-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr and Dār Beirūt lī al-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1966), 8:24ff. (hereafter cited as al-Kāmil); al-‘Abbādī, al-Tārīkh al-Andalusī, pp. 383-95; Aḥmad Mukhtār al-‘Abbādī, Fī al-Tārīkh al-‘Abbāsī wa al-Fātimī (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1971), pp. 223-38 (hereafter cited as al-Tārīkh al-Fātimī); Muṣṭafā Ghālib, Tārīkh al-Da‘wah al-Islāmīyah Mundhu Aqdam al-‘Usūr wa hattā ‘Asrinā al-Hādīr, 2nd ed., rev. (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965), pp. 172-76 (hereafter cited as al-Da‘wah).

20. Al-Marrākishī, Mu‘jib, pp. 37-39, n. 1; al-‘Abbādī, al-Tārīkh al-Andalusī, pp. 378-79; Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, 3rd. ed., rev. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1946), pp. 469, 523 (hereafter cited as History).
21. Hitti writes that what encouraged ‘Abd al-Rahmān III to adopt this title was the dwindling power of the Abbasid caliphate. But one should remember that the weakness of the Abbasids was not a new phenomenon at that time. Al-‘Abbādī, on the other hand, although he acknowledges this factor, adds two other reasons for ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s move. The first is the disturbed internal situation in Spain itself where decades of internal dissension had a negative effect on the prestige of the office of leadership. The second is the rise of the Fātimid danger which, according to him, was the main reason that provoked ‘Abd al-Rahmān to proclaim himself caliph. The Fātimids proclaimed themselves to be the descendants of the prophet who alone deserve to be his caliphs. Their missionaries were very active in Spain and Morocco from the time they established themselves in Ifriqiyah. Finally in 315/928, the year before ‘Abd al-Rahmān adopted the title, they intervened militarily in Morocco which the Umayyads of Spain had always considered as part of their area of influence. See: Hitti, History, pp. 520ff.; al-‘Abbādī, al-Tārīkh al-Andalusī, pp. 379-80, 383-96.
22. Some modern scholars hold that the Brethren belonged to the Qarmatian faction of the Shi‘ah. De Boer and Widengren state this as a fact without

further discussing it. Madelung, on the other hand, is wholeheartedly devoted to this concept. In a series of articles he argues mainly that the history of the relationship between the Qarmatians and the Fāṭimids during the fourth/tenth century shows that the Epistles were an attempt, on the Qarmatians' part, to counter the Fāṭimids ideologically. Hamdani and Marquet totally reject this view. Marquet, in particular, tried to show that the conceptual structure of the Epistles is in complete contrast with Qarmatian tenets. See: De Boer, History, pp. 81-82; Widengren, "Pure Brethren," p. 58; W. Madelung, EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Karmatī," particularly p. 663; W. Madelung, "Fāṭimides und Bahrainqarmaten," Der Islam 34 (1959):34-68; "Das Imāmat in der Frühen Ismailitischen Lehre," Der Islam 37 (1961):43-135; Yves Marquet, "Iḥwān al-Ṣafā', Ismailiens et Qarmates," Arabica 24 (1977):233-57 (hereafter cited as "Ismailiens"); Abbas Hamdani, "An Early Fāṭimid Source on the Time and Authorship of the Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'," Arabica 25-26 (1978-79):69-70 (hereafter cited as "Fāṭimid Source").

23. The Abbasid da'wah raised the obscure motto "al-riḍā min ʿāl Muḥammad" without clearly designating whether the imam was Alid or Abbasid. After the success of the Abbasid movement, it was announced that the 'Alid imam transferred the da'wah to the Abbasid line. It should be noted that the transfer was from the Ḥanafite line, that is the descendants of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyah, 'Alī's son by a Ḥanafite woman. These formed the revolutionary branch of the Shī'ah since the revolt of al-Mukhtār in 66/685. The Fāṭimid branch, that is the descendants of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, Alī's sons from the prophet's daughter Fāṭimah, represented the conservative branch until the rise of the Abbasids when the Ḥanafites lost their raison d'être and their remnants were absorbed in the Fāṭimid branch. From then on rebellions against the Abbasids came from this branch. Bernard Lewis, The Origins of Isma'ilism (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1940), pp. 26-27 (hereafter cited as Origins). For the story of the transfer of the imamate from the Alids to the Abbasids, see Akḥbār al-Dawlah al-'Abbasiyah: wa fīhī Akḥbār al-'Abbās wa Waladīh [unknown author of the third century

- Hijrī], ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Durī and ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Muṭṭalibī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah li al-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1971); Abī Muḥammad ‘Abd Allah Ibn Muslim Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah [Tārīkh al-Khulafā’], ed. Ṭahā Muḥammad al-Zinī, 2 vols. in one (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1967), 2:108-09 (hereafter cited as al-Imāmah); al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shi‘ah, commented on by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Āl Baḥr al-‘Ulūm (al-Najaf: Maṭba‘at al-Ḥaidariyah, 1959), pp. 52-55 (hereafter cited as Firaq).
24. For the events of the revolts, see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 7:552-609; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 5:513, 529-52, 560-71.
25. Note that this revolt was made in the name of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyah. Although he did not explicitly announce his approval of the revolt, he did not publicly deny his relation with al-Mukhtar either. For this and the events of the revolt, see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 6:38-75, 82-85, 93-116; al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq, pp. 44-45; al-Dīnawarī, al-Imamah, 2:19-20; Abī al-Fath Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm Ibn Abī Bakr Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Muḥammad al-Wakīl, 3 vols. in one (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1968) 1:148, 149 (hereafter cited as Milal); ‘Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī, al-Farq Baynā al-Firaq wa Bayān al-Firqah al-Nājiyah Minhum (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1973), pp. 31-38 (hereafter cited as al-Farq); Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Fātimiyah, 3rd. ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Nahdah al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), pp. 15-20 (hereafter cited as al-Dawlah al-Fātimiyah). For the messianic ideas in al-Mukhtar’s revolt, see al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq, pp. 47-51; al-Shahrastānī, Milal, 1:147-50; al-Baghdādī, al-Farq, pp. 27-30; Lewis, Origins, pp. 25-26.
26. Al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq, pp. 89, 101-05; Idrīs ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Guraishī, ‘Uyūn al-Akḥbār wa Funūn al-Āthār, ed. with an introduction by Muṣṭafā Ghālib, Silsilat al-Turāth al-Fātimī, no. 10 (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth al-Fātimī, 1973), 4th 1/7:332-36 (hereafter cited as ‘Uyūn); Ghālib, al-Da‘wah, pp. 137-38; Ḥasan, al-Dawlah al-Fātimiyah, pp. 37-39; Lewis, Origins, pp. 40-43. For a summation

of the doctrines of the Twelvers and the Ismā'īlīs respectively, see al-Shahrastānī, Milāl, 1:169-73, 191ff.

27. Al-Shahrastānī, Milāl, 1:167-68, 191; al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq, pp. 88-90; Lewis, Origins, pp. 37-39. Ghālib, who is an Ismā'īlī himself, after giving a review of the contrasting reports regarding whether or not Ismā'īl died during his father's lifetime, gives his own opinion. He states that Ismā'īl did not actually die during his father's lifetime, but that his father spread the false news of his death and brought witnesses for this so as to protect him, after proclaiming him his heir to the imamate, from the caliph al-Manṣūr. Contrary to the stories that Ismā'īl was deprived of the imamate by his father who saw him drinking, Ghālib insists that Ismā'īl was Ja'far's favourite, and that he asked him to conceal himself, which he did until his death in Iraq in 158/774-75. See Ghālib, al-Da'wah, pp. 138-43.
28. For Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, see al-Quraishī, Uyūn, 4th 1/7:351-56; Ghālib, al-Da'wah, pp. 144-48. For the line of the hidden imams after Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl and their activities in spreading the da'wah, see Ghālib, al-Da'wah, pp. 162-71; al-Quraishī, Uyūn, 4th 1/7:351-404; Lewis, Origins, pp. 44ff. For more details on the activities of the dā'īs themselves, see al-Nu'mān, Iftitāh; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, pp. 28-33, 51ff.; al-Baghdādī, al-Farq, pp. 165-67; Ḥasan, al-Dawlah al-Fāṭimiyah, pp. 39-43. For a review of the organization of the dā'īs, their ranks and duties, see Ghālib, al-Da'wah, pp. 35-47.
29. Al-Nu'mān, Iftitāh, pp. 32ff.; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, pp. 52-53, 68-69. Yemen not only provided a centre for the da'wah, but also the dā'ī 'Abd Allah al-Shī'ī, whose role in the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate in Ifriqiyah was central, trained there with the dā'ī Ibn Ḥawshab. For the beginning of his career, his success and fate, see, in addition to the two works cited above, Ghālib, al-Da'wah, pp. 146, 170, 172ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kamil, 8:31ff.
30. Al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq, p. 93, n. 1; al-Baghdādī, al-Farq, p. 267; Thābit ibn Sinān and Ibn al-'Adīm, Tārīkh Akhbār al-Qarāmitah wa Tarjamat al-Ḥasan

al-A'ṣam al-Qarmatī, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dā' al-Amānah and Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1971), pp. 7-12 (hereafter cited as Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah); Lewis, Origins, pp. 73-74. For a very detailed discussion of the rise of the Qarmatians in Iraq, see Muḥammad 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Alyān, Qarāmitat al-'Irāq fī al-Qarnayn al-Thālith wa al-Rābi' al-Hijriyyin (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Ta'līf wa al-Nashr, 1970), pp. 13-58 (hereafter cited as Qarāmitat al-'Irāq); Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar ibn Muẓaffar [Ibn al-Wardī], Tārīkh Ibn al-Wardī, introduced by Muḥammad Mahdī al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūlūwī al-Kharsān, 2 vols. (Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Haydariyah, 1969), 1:333 (hereafter cited as Tārīkh). Note that the date of the rise of the Qarmatians in Kūfā differs from one source to the other, from 266 H. to 276 H. to 277 H.

31. Al-Nawbakhtī, Fīraq, p. 93, n. 1; al-Baghdādī, al-Farq, p. 267; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 13-14; Ibn al-Wardī, Tārīkh, 1:338; Lewis, Origins, pp. 76-80.
32. Al-Nawbakhtī, Fīraq, pp. 93-94. Note that although al-Nawbakhtī and al-Baghdādī view the Qarmatians as a branch of the Ismā'īlī sect, Lewis suggests that there is no relation between the two movements. Lewis, Origins, p. 76. For a full discussion of the opinions of early and modern scholars about the relationship between the Qarmatians and the Ismā'īlīs, see 'Alyān, Qarāmitat al-'Irāq, pp. 46-58.

It should be remarked here that the claim of 'Ubayd Allah (and, hence, of the Fāṭimids) that he belonged to the house of the prophet has been disputed. A counter claim was made that he was in reality the offspring of Maymūn al-Qaddah, who some sources portray as an Ismā'īlī dā'ī, while others state that he was a Jew. Regarding the dispute over the genealogy of the Fāṭimid caliphs, see al-Maqrizī, Itti'āz, pp. 25ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:24-31, 9:236; 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, al-Muqaddimah: Tārīkh al-'Allāmah Ibn Khaldūn: Kitāb al-'Ibar wa Diwān al-Mubtada' wa al-Khabar fī Ayām al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa man 'Āṣarahum min Dhawī

al-Şultān al-Akbar (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyyah li al-Nashr, al-Dār al-‘Arabiyyah li al-Kitāb, 1984), pp. 50-55. For modern studies, see Ghālib, al-Da‘wah, pp. 153-61, 176-83; Lewis, Origins, pp. 54-71; Wladimir Ivanow, The Alleged Founder of Ismailism, the Ismaili Society series, no. 1 (Rampart Row, Bombay, India: Thacker & Co., Booksellers, 1946); Abbas Hamdani and François De Blois, "A Re-Examination of Al-Mahdī's Letter to the Yemenites on the Genealogy of the Fatimid Caliphs," JRAS, no. 2 (1983):173-207 (hereafter cited as "Re-Examination").

33. The Brethren did not only conceal their identity but they also refrained from indicating the centre of their activities. Al-‘Abd, stating that they were Bāṭinis, suggests that they did not have a definite headquarters because their missionary activities caused them to move constantly. See ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-‘Abd, al-Insān fī Fikr lkhwān al-Safā’ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣriyyah, 1976), pp. 27-28 (hereafter cited as al-Insān). Others, who claim that they were chief Ismā‘ilī dā‘is, hold that the city of Salamiyah was their headquarters because it was the centre of the Ismā‘ilī imam and his chief dā‘is. See Muṣṭafā Ghālib, A‘lām al-Ismā‘iliyah (Beirut: Dār al-Yaqazah al-‘Arabiyyah li al-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1964), p. 136; Hījāb, al-Falsafah al-Siyāsiyah, pp. 61-62; ‘Ārif Tāmīr, Haqiqat lkhwān al-Şafā’ wa Khillān al-Wafā’, 2nd ed., Nuṣūṣ wa Durūs, no. 3 (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kāthūlikiyah, 1966), p. 13 (hereafter cited as Haqiqat). But neither of the above two claims has substantive evidence to support it as they are built mainly on the unproven assumption that the Brethren were Ismā‘ilīs.

It is true that the Brethren have never referred directly to the centre of their activity. But the persistent references in the Epistles to Iraq, not to Syria, indicate that the former was their headquarters. This is supported by al-Tawḥīdī's report about the Brethren, to the effect that they were working at Baṣrah and that at least one of them, at the time of the report, was residing in Baghdād. In fact, almost all non-Ismā‘ilī scholars accept al-Tawḥīdī's report and agree that Baṣrah was the

Brethren's headquarters. Some suggest that the society had a branch in Baghdād, usually basing this not on al-Tawhīdī, but on a verse by Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī in which he expresses his longing for “ikhwān al-ṣafā’” and his having had meetings with them. Al-Mi‘arrī visited Baghdād in 398 or 399. But the expression ikhwān al-ṣafā’ may simply refer, in a general way, to intimate friends, particularly as the expression had been used in this sense in Arabic poetry since the Jāhilī period. See Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī, Kitāb al-Imtā‘ wa al-Mu‘ānasah, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zīn, 3 vols. in one (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, n.d.) 2:4, 11 (hereafter cited as Imtā‘). For the opinion that they had a branch in Baghdād, see, for example, De Boer, History, p. 84; Hitti, History, pp. 458-59; ‘Umar al-Disūqī, Ikhwān al-Safā’, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1973), pp. 48-49, 54-61; Yuḥanna Qumayr, Ikhwān al-Safā’: Dirāsah-Mukhtārāt, 2nd rev. ed. (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1954), p. 9 (hereafter cited as Ikhwān al-Safā’).

34. Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century, A History of the Near East Series, gen. ed. P.M. Holt, no. 1 (London and New York: Longman, 1986), pp. 158-61 (hereafter cited as The Age of the Caliphates).
35. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:17-18; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 6:451-52.
36. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:11-17, 23-28, 29-30, 31-71, 80-89; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 6:444-45, 447-51, 456-60, 461-75, 475-76, 480-89, 495-505, 510.
37. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:222-30; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:95.
38. The four caliphs that held the office during these nine years of anarchy were: al-Muntaṣir (247-48/861-62), al-Musta‘īn (248-52/862-66), al-Mu‘tazz (252-55/866-69) and al-Muhtadī (255-56/869-70). The first died suddenly, probably of natural causes. The second was deposed and exiled to Wāṣit. The third was assassinated and the fourth died fighting the military. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:251-54, 348-54, 362-66, 388-90, 456-69; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:114, 167-68, 195-98, 228-33; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp.

171-75.

39. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:256; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 173.
40. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 173-74.
41. Ibid., p. 177. See for their gradual successes in overcoming the Tahirids, al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:255, 382-86, 476, 507, 516; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:184-85, 191-95, 247-48, 261-63, 268-69.
42. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:516-20; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:290-92.
43. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:381; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:187-88.
44. Hitti, History, pp. 452ff.
45. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:410-30; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:205-15.
46. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:481-88; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:244-46.
47. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 180-81; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:259, 312-16; al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:472-73, 536-40.
48. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 180.
49. The three main dangers in the central provinces at the time were the Ṣaffarids, the Zanj and the Qarmatians. Although the three movements benefited from each other's activities which hampered the efforts of the government to subdue any of them (see, for example, Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:290, 292), they did not officially join forces. The Ṣaffarids refused the cooperation offered by the Zanj leader, while an attempt by the Qarmatians to gain the collaboration of the Zanj ended when the former discovered the differences between their beliefs, as well as their objectives. For the Ṣaffarids and the Zanj, see Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 178; for the Qarmatians and the Zanj, see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:27; 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Jawzī, al-Qarāmitah, 3rd ed., edited by Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāgh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1970), p. 44.



50. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 175-76.
51. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:516-20; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:290-92.
52. He had accepted the Abbasids' offer which his father had declined, namely, the governorship of Khurasān, Fārs, Iṣfahān, Sistān, Kirmān and Sind. See Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:325-26; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 178.
53. An annual tribute was to be paid by them in exchange for Abbasid recognition. See Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:409-10; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 178-79.
54. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 9:654-61; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:399-406.
55. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 182-83.
56. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 183.
57. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:39; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:469.
58. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ḥilāl ibn al-Muḥsin al-Ṣābi, al-Wuzarā' [Tuhfat al Umarā' fī Tārīkh al-Wuzarā'], ed. 'Abd al-Sattar Aḥmad Farrāj (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1958), pp. 13-14.
59. Abu 'Alī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam, 4 vols. (Egypt: Sharikat al-Tamaddun al-Ṣinā'iyah, 1914-15), 1:180-81, 241 (hereafter cited as Tajārib).
60. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:118-20; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:535-37.
61. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:241.
62. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:94-96; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:511-12; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 17-19.
63. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:86, 94; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:512-13; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 15-19.
64. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:97-104; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:523-24; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 19-20.

65. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:104-107; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:526; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 22-23.
66. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 10:130-34; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 7:550-52; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 23-36.
67. For some examples of the influence of Mu'nis, the military leader, and his alliance with the wazīr 'Alī ibn 'Isā and rivalry with the wazīr Ibn al-Furāt, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:18-19, 25-26, 27, 43-44, 149; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 188-89.
68. For examples of the rivalries of the wazīrs, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:20-23, 26, 41, 56, 85, 113; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 188-89.
69. The reconquest of Fārs yielded an extra eighteen million dirhams per year, while the revenues from Egypt considerably increased as a result of the able administration of the Irāqī Mādhārā'i brothers. See Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 190, 191-92.
70. For the ever increasing expenses of the army and the reluctance of the soldiers to perform their duties in subduing the rebels and the independent rulers, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:116, 184. For the extravagant caliphal expenditures, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:13, 29, 40, 42-43, and especially 238-41.
71. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 189-90.
72. See p. 19-20 and n. 107 below for the difference between iqṭā' lamlik and iqṭā' istighlāl.
73. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 189.
74. Kennedy states that, although the military iqṭā' meant that the revenues of a given land would be assigned to an individual in exchange for a sum of money, it differed from tax-farming in that the grantee in the former system was the governor, the military leader and the tax farmer at one and the same time. This practice started as early as the time of al-Ma'mūn in Azarbayjān when the caliph was faced with a local rebellion and, hence,

offered the revenues and governorship of the province to whomever was able to crush the rebels. This practice continued for the same reason and in the outlying provinces until the time of al-Muqtadir when the wazir Ibn al-Furāt offered Baghdad itself to Yusuf ibn Abi al-Sāj. Moreover, the wazir Ibn Muqlā was obliged to sell the soldiers, who helped in crushing a coup against al-Muqtadir in 317/929, state lands at very reduced prices, on which they were to pay only 'ushr not kharāj. See Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 192-93; Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:200.

75. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:120-21; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 37-38; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:143-44, 147.
76. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:121-31, 137-39; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 38-43; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:147-50, 151-55. Note that these early sources mention that the riots that started as a reaction to the Qarmatians' raids attracted the wives of those kuttāb whose wealth had been confiscated by Ibn al-Furāt.
77. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 194.
78. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:147; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, p. 46; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:162.
79. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:172-80; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 46-49; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:170-75.
80. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:147-48; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, p. 46; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:162.
81. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:201; Ibn Sinān, Tārīkh al-Qarāmitah, pp. 53-54; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:207-08.
82. For examples of the relation of Mu'nis and al-Muqtadir, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:85, 160, 188, 193ff. See also Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:169-70, 224-25. For the death of al-Muqtadir, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:209-11, 221ff., 233-37; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:241-44.

83. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:241-42; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:244-46.
84. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:267-68, 295ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:260-62.
85. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:286-95; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:279-82.
86. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:323-24.
87. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:335, 349; 2:30; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:322. For the rising power of the Barīdīs, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:158-59, 205-09, 246ff., 320-21, 340-50; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:306-07.
88. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:351-52; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:322-23.
89. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:352; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:323.
90. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:356ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:336.
91. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:23-24, 26, 28; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:380ff.
92. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:24-26; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:381-82.
93. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:385.
94. Among modern scholars, D.M. Dunlop believes that al-Fārābī departed from Baghdād and joined the Hamdanids as a direct result of these incidents. E. Rosenthal, although not stating this directly, believes like Dunlop that the relation of al-Fārābī with the Hamdanids had its impact on his political thought. Their opinions concerning this impact on his political thought will be discussed in chapter three of the thesis. See Erwin L.J. Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 132-34 (hereafter cited as Political Thought); D.M. Dunlop, ed. and trans., introduction to Fuṣūl al-Madani [Aphorisms of the Statesman] by al-Fārābī (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 13-17 (hereafter cited as Aphorisms).
95. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:84-85; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:449-50.
96. Before the arrival of Aḥmad ibn Buwayh in Baghdād, his two brothers, ‘Alī (‘Imād al-Dawlah) and al-Ḥasan (Rukn al-Dawlah) had already established

Buwayhid principalities in Fārs and Rayy, respectively. For the origins and the rise of the Buwayhids, see Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 212-22; Mufizullah Kabīr, The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad "334/946-447/1055" (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1964), pp. 1-6 (hereafter cited as Buwayhid).

97. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 212, 222.
98. EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Djaysh," by C.P. Cahen; 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, Muqaddimah fī al-Tārīkh al-Iqtisādī al-'Arabī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, 1969), pp. 87-88. For the reason and examples of their feuds, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:99-100, 173-74; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:456-57.
99. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:95ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:456.
100. Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyah, 1357 H.), 8:60 (hereafter cited as al-Muntazim).
101. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:97; Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 222.
102. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, Tārīkh al-'Irāq al-Iqtisādī fī al-Qarn al-Rābi' al-Hijrī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974), p. 53 (hereafter cited as Tārīkh); Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Zubaidī, al-'Irāq fī al-'Asr al-Buwaiḥī (Beirut: Dar al-Nahḍah al-'Arabiyyah, 1969), p. 113 (hereafter cited as al-'Irāq).
103. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:87, 96; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:450; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim, 6:357.
104. Al-Dūrī, Tārīkh, p. 44; al-Zubaidī, al-'Irāq, p. 123.
105. See Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:97, 99; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:453.
106. Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Māwardī, al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1960), p. 196 (hereafter cited as Ahkām); al-Dūrī, Tārīkh, p. 44.
107. lqṭā' istighlāl makes the grantee enjoy only the right of usufruct of the revenue of the land and only for a determined period of time. See al-Māwardī, Ahkām, pp. 194-95.

108. Ibid., pp. 190-94.
109. Ibid., p. 196.
110. This can be derived from Miskawayh's description of the situation that resulted from the widespread use of military iqṭāʿ. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:96-100.
111. Ibid., 2:97, 98.
112. Ibid., 2:97, 98, 99.
113. Iljāʿ or taljiʿah, as described in the original sources, applies to the situation when a weak landowner commits his estate to the protection of a strong landowner in order to secure protection from the extortionate demands of the tax collector. Although there usually was a taljiʿah contract, when the strong landowner died, his heirs did not respect the contract and, as a consequence, the small landlords lost their estates. See Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Khwarizmī, Mafātiḥ al-ʿUlūm (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1923), p. 41. See also: al-Durī, Tārīkh, pp. 46, 62; Ann K.S. Lambton, "Reflections on the Iqṭāʿ," in Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A.R. Gibb, ed. George Maqdisi (Leiden, 1965), pp. 362-63. Note that Miskawayh mentions that the oppressed landlords used to give their estate to the land grantee himself.
114. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:97, 98.
115. For examples of this, see Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim, 7:83; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 9:65; Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:91, 112.
116. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:106 (n.), 165.
117. For a vivid description of scenes of famine, poverty and unrest, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:95-96, 308, 314.
118. For examples of confiscation, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:83-84, 106-07, 110-11, 157, 184-85, 234-35, 308; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:456-57, 465; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim, 7:286, 8:13.

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119. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 9:79-80. Note that Bakhtiyār also confiscated the properties of al-Muṭī' in 361. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:307-08.
120. Al-Durī, Tārīkh, pp. 56-58; al-Zubaidī, al-ʿIrāq, pp. 114-17, 117ff. For examples of their concerns and efforts to repair the agricultural economy, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:88, 106-07 (n.), 165, 406-07, where he mentions that Mu'izz al-Dawlah participated in repairing breakages in dams, while ʿAḍud al-Dawlah ordered the excavating of canals and delayed the collection of kharāj until after the harvest. See also, Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim, 7:39, 78; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:704-05.
121. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 224.
122. Ibid., pp. 227-28. Examples of the reports of tension are the demolishing of a mosque in Karkh in 313/925 on the orders of al-Muqtadir when it became a centre of pro-ʿAlid elements who believed that ʿAlī himself prayed there. Al-Rāḍī also issued an order in 323/935 preventing the Hanbalis from attacking the Shīʿa. See Miskawayh, Tajārib, 1:322-23; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:307-09.
123. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 213.
124. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:542-43. Note that on the recommendation of his wazīr al-Muhallabī, Mu'izz al-Dawlah changed the order to a cursing of Muʿāwiyah.
125. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:558; Ibn al-Wardī, Tārīkh, 1:402
126. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 226-27. For events of the crisis, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:303ff. and especially p. 338 where he mentions that the strife was not only religious but also political.
127. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:308-09, 338.
128. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 230-31.
129. Ibid., pp. 231, 236.

130. Ibid., pp. 230-31.

131. Ibid., pp. 231.

132. Ibid.

133. Note that al-Hamadhānī and Ibn al-Athīr relate that the Shīʿī Buwayhid Muʿizz al-Dawlah thought of deposing the Abbasid caliph in favour of an ʿAlid. Despite some differences in the details of the two reports, they both agree that Muʿizz al-Dawlah was advised not to take this step because an ʿAlid caliph, unlike an Abbasid one, would win the support of most of the populace and would hence pose a threat to the authority of the Buwayhid prince. See al-Hamadhānī, al-Takmilah, quoted in Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:87, n. 1; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:452-53. Gibb rejects this view, referring to the contradictions in the two reports and also to the fact that Miskawayh, a contemporary annalist, did not report this incident. He holds that they did not set up an ʿAlid caliphate because they were inhibited in every direction from doing so. They were hostile to the Ismāʿīlīs. The Ithnā ʿAsharī imam was believed to be in concealment and they were not fighting in the name of any Zaidī imam. For the detailed discussion of this, see H.A.R. Gibb, "Government and Islam," in L'Elaboration de l'Islam, Centre d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisé d'Histoire des Religions, Colloque de Strasbourg: Juin 1959 (Paris: Presses Universitaires des Francs, 1961), pp. 115ff. Kennedy, adopting Gibb's view, also holds that the Buwayhids respected the Abbasid caliphate because, given their humble social origins and their position as outsiders in the Islamic world, they were looking for political legitimacy. Thus, they had to seek and secure the approval of the legitimate caliph for their actions. The installment of an ʿAlid caliph would have been a major revolutionary step that would have caused serious opposition at a time when the Buwayhids were seeking a place in the established order. See Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, p. 218.

134. Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:87; Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:452. For a moving confession regarding the reduction of the caliph to no more than a symbol, see al-



- Muṭī's letter to Bakhtiyār reported by Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:307-08.
135. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, 8:450, 452. For incidental references to this, see Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:87, 96, 307.
136. RIS, 2:356. Compare, Miskawayh, Tajārib, 2:95-96 for a parallel scene.
137. RIS, 2:358. References to the widespread practice of confiscation, to diwān al-musādarāt, to the hypocrisy of the people when informing the authorities about the properties of friends, are abundant in the Epistles. See, for example, 2:359; 3:161, 163; 4:254.
138. For some examples, see RIS, 2:50-51, 144.
139. RIS, 1:380.
140. RIS, 4:69.
141. For a few examples, see RIS, 1:184; 2:243, 261; 3:161, 535ff.
142. See, for example, RIS, 2:328; 3:169, 312, 376, 501; 4:44.
143. See, for example, RIS, 2:242, 300, 358, 360; 3:161, 163; 4:254.
144. For a similar view, see Enayat, Outline, p. 38.
145. Kennedy, The Age of the Caliphates, pp. 200-01.
146. Al-Rāzī and Ibn Sīna are two prominent examples. Al-Fārābī, according to Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, knew medicine theoretically although he did not practise it. See Aḥmad ibn al-Qāsim ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, 'Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Tabaqāt al-Atibbā' (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1957), 3:223 (hereafter cited as 'Uyūn).
147. Hitti, History, p. 458.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 462.
149. This was stated in some of the book's MSS. See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-Mūsīqā al-Kabīr, ed. Ghattās 'Abd al-Malik Khashabah, rev. and introduced by Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Ḥifnī (Cairo: Dār al-Katib al-'Arabī li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1967), p. 35, n. 1. Some early biographers of al-Fārābī

- also mention this information. See Ibn Abi Uṣaibi'ah, ʿUyūn, 3:230; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl Ibn Aʿybak al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi bi al-Wafiyāt, al-Nashriyāt al-Islāmiyah li Jamʿiyat al-Mustashriqīn al-Almāniyah, no. 6, 22 vols. (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawlah, 1931), vol. 1 ed. H. Ritter, 1:109 (hereafter cited as al-Wāfi).
150. See the introduction to al-Tawḥidī, al-Imtāʿ, pp. dff.
  151. Hitti, History, p. 458. For al-Isbahānī, see Abu Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād Aw Madīnat al-Salam, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 11:399; Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazim, 7:40.
  152. Kabir, Buwayhid, p. 175.
  153. Adam Mez, The Renaissance of Islam, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D.S. Margoliouth (Patna: The Jubilee Printing and Publishing House, 1937).
  154. Ibn al-Nadīm states that the first translations which were in the fields of medicine, astrology and chemistry were made for the Umayyad prince Khalid ibn Yazīd. Ibn al-ʿIbrī, on the other hand, said that the first translation into Arabic was in medicine and was done for the caliph Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam. See Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Abī Yaʿqūb Ishāq al-Nadīm, Kitāb al-Fihrist fi Akhbār al-ʿUlamāʾ al-Muṣannifin min al-Gudamāʾ wa al-Muhdathin wa Asmāʾ Kutubihim, ed. Riḍā-Tajaddud, 10 vols. in one (Tehran: n.p., 1971), 10:419 (hereafter cited as al-Fihrist); Grigorios al-Maṭṭī (Ibn al-ʿIbrī), Tārīkh Mukhtasar al-Duwal, ed. Anṭūn Ṣalḥānī al-Yasūʿī (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1958), pp. 111-12 (hereafter cited as Mukhtasar).
  155. Ṣāʿid ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṣāʿid al-Taghlibī al-Andalusī, Tabaqāt al-Umam, with a forward by al-Sayyid Muḥammad Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (al-Najaf: al-Maktabah al-Haydariyyah, 1967), pp. 63-64 (hereafter cited as Tabaqāt; Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, pp. 10-12).
  156. Most of the book's manuscripts list Ibn Nāʿimah al-Ḥimṣī as being the translator. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Aflūṭīn ʿInda al-ʿArab, 2nd ed., Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah, no. 20 (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1966), pp.

43-55.

157. Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:315-20; Abū Sulaymān al-Mantīqī al-Sijistānī, Ṣiwān al-Hikmah wa Thalāth Rasā'il, edited with an introduction by 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (Tehran, 1974), pp. 282-97 (hereafter cited as Ṣiwān).
158. See Abu Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī, Rasā'il al-Kindī al-Falsafiyah, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīdah, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1953). See, in particular, his treatise "Fī al-Falsafah al-Ulā," vol. 1, chap. 2, pp. 106-22 and chap. 4, pp. 160-61.
159. The early sources mention a treatise by al-Fārābī answering al-Rāzī in the divine sciences. See Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, 'Uyun, 3:231; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi, 1:109. For the Ismā'īlī criticism, see Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī, A'lām al-Nubuwwah, edited with an introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977).
160. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, al-Rāzī's Opera Philosophica, ed. Paul Krause (Cairo, 1939), particularly pp. 192-286. See also Majid Fakhry, "A Tenth Century Arab Interpretation of Plato's Cosmology," JHI 6 (1968):15-17.
161. Al-Rāzī, A'lām, see particularly chaps. 3, 4, 5, 7.
162. Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq al-Sijistānī, Kitāb Ithbāt al-Nubuwwat, ed. 'Arif Tāmir (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1966), pp. 13ff. (hereafter cited as Ithbāt).
163. Paul E. Walker, "Cosmic Hierarchies in Early Ismā'īlī Thought: The View of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī," MW LXVI (January 1976):18ff.; Samī Nasib Makarem, The Doctrine of the Ismailis (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1972), pp. 17-18 (hereafter cited as Ismailis).
164. Makarem, Ismailis, pp. 18-21.
165. Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, al-Yanābi', edited with an introduction by Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijārī li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1965), pp. 79-81; Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, Rāḥat al-'Aql, edited with

- an introduction by Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusain and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1953), pp. 69-73; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyīn, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyyīn, 1973), 2:232-36; Sami N. Makarem, "Isma‘īli and Druze Cosmogony in Relation to Plotinus and Aristotle", in Michael E. Marmura, ed., Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 81-91.
166. Al-Fārābī himself gives us an account of how Greek philosophy and sciences were transmitted to the Arabs through the school of Alexandria. This account is cited by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:224-25. See also, Max Meyerhaf, Von Alexandrien Nach Baghdad, translated and cited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, al-Turāth al-Yunānī fī al-Hadārah al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsāt li Kibār al-Mustashriqīn, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabiyyah, 1965), pp. 37-100; Nicholas Rescher, Studies in the History of Arabic Logic (England: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), pp. 13-16 (hereafter cited as Arabic Logic).
167. Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:309.
168. Rescher, Arabic Logic, p. 24.
169. Muḥsin Mahdī, introduction to Kitāb al-Hurūf by Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970), pp. 47-49 (hereafter cited as KH).
170. Al-Sijistānī, Siwān, pp. 328-31, 346-53.

## CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN STUDYING AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In studying the political thought of a philosopher, knowledge of his personal life is extremely helpful in revealing his aims and intentions and in clarifying why his political thought took the specific form in which it appears. With Plato, for example, because one does possess knowledge of his personal life which is intricately connected with his political philosophy, it is easier to comprehend the incentive behind and the elements of this philosophy. Unfortunately, in the case of al-Fārābī (258-339/870-950), who is the architect of Islamic Platonic political philosophy, we know very little about his life. Thus, we do know that he was associated with the circle of Nestorian logicians who represented a continuation of the Alexandrian school of philosophy. We also know that he studied Arabic grammar with Ibn al-Sarrāj, a leading grammarian in fourth/tenth century Baghdad,<sup>1</sup> and that he wrote his Kitāb al-Mūsīqā al-Kabīr (Grand Book of Music) on the request of al-Rāḍī's vizir Abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Qasim al-Karkhī, which suggests that he had patrons while in Baghdad.<sup>2</sup> But even this knowledge is incomplete since, for example, we do not know who his teachers in music were.

But what is more important is that we are almost totally ignorant of those aspects of his personal life that are relevant to the political circumstances of the day. We know that he left Baghdad in 330/941 for Syria. This move has been the source of much speculation that has its political implications.<sup>3</sup> But why did he actually leave? We do not really know. This leads to another mystery concerning the nature of his relation to the Hamdanids. Was his relation with

Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdani merely a relation between a thinker and a prince who appreciated his intellectual capabilities, or did it have its political aspects?

Lack of knowledge of this side of his personal life is very much felt when we read his political writings. For they are very theoretical and he never makes any direct allusion to contemporary political events.<sup>4</sup> This lack of knowledge of his personal life also hinders us from filling the gaps concerning the question of the authenticity of some of the works attributed to him and the chronology of his writings. The theoretical aspect of his political writings poses another problem in our understanding of his political thought, namely the relation of his political theory to his cosmology and metaphysics. For our purpose we will single out two of these problems related to the study of his political thought and investigate them.

The first of these two problems is related to the books al-Fārābī wrote. Contradictory information is given in the original sources concerning the number of books attributed to al-Fārābī. There is disparity in the number given. Some sources give less than ten, others more than one hundred. This immediately raises the question of which of these books are authentic. The problem is even more complicated in the case of al-Fārābī's political works in particular, because sometimes discrepancies exist in the information given in some of these books. Thus it is the researcher's responsibility to try and determine the authenticity of those of al-Fārābī's books which he uses in studying al-Fārābī's thought.

The second problem to be considered here is closely related to the first one. It investigates the endeavour of some scholars to establish the chronological

order of al-Fārābī's works, especially the political ones. The discrepancies in some of these works, if a chronological relation can be found, can be explained as development in al-Fārābī's thought rather than confusion on his part. Closely related to this, as we shall see, is the relation of al-Fārābī's metaphysics to his political theory. Al-Fārābī was studied primarily as a logician and a commentator on Greek philosophers until Leo Strauss brought him into light as a political philosopher. But al-Fārābī's political works which first attracted the attention of scholars and are regarded by them as the main source of al-Fārābī's own thought, namely, Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City, hereafter cited as Virtuous City) and al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyah (Political Regime), have a rather peculiar structure. They start with metaphysics or cosmology then they move to psychology and only at the end does politics come. This unique structure is undoubtedly suggestive of the deep relation that exists between al-Fārābī's metaphysics and politics. Thus it is crucial for any researcher who studies al-Fārābī's political thought through analyzing his political works to try first to explain for his readers why these books in politics are presented in this manner.

### **I The Problem of the Number and the Authenticity of al-Fārābī's Books**

Al-Fārābī's literary output is enormous. This can be derived from the lists of his books offered in early sources. However, an examination of these lists reveals considerable disparity in the number of books given, so much so that an explanation has to be sought.

The first attempt to give a list of al-Fārābī's works came as early as the end of the fourth/tenth century in the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm, where he listed seven books.<sup>5</sup> Almost a century later, Ibn Šā'id al-Andalusī (d. 462/1069-70), in the context of his biography of al-Fārābī, mentioned four of al-Fārābī's works, three of which were not included in Ibn al-Nadīm's list.<sup>6</sup> The number rose to twelve books another century later in al-Baihaqī's (d. 565/1169) two books: Tārīkh Hukamā' al-Islam and Tatimma Siwān al-Hikma.<sup>7</sup> In an Itmām to al-Baihaqī's Tatimmah, al-Ghaznawī, whose dates are not certain (probably late sixth/twelfth century), added twenty-two titles to the original twelve mentioned by al-Baihaqī.<sup>8</sup> Al-Qiftī (d. 646/1248) who was writing about three centuries after al-Fārābī's death was the first to give us a rather detailed list of al-Fārābī's works. Thus, the number of books we find in al-Qiftī's list jumps to seventy-two.<sup>9</sup> Only one generation after al-Qiftī, Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah (d. 668/1269) gave the most elaborate list in the original sources. It contains one hundred and fifteen titles<sup>10</sup> and later medieval sources usually copied it.<sup>11</sup>

Because al-Fārābī's writings are still in the process of being recovered, several attempts have been made by modern scholars to form new up-to-date lists of his works. However, the same fluctuation in the number of works contained in the lists of the early sources continues in modern studies. Thus, Brockelmann lists one hundred and eighty-seven books for al-Fārābī.<sup>12</sup> Rescher, giving more attention to the subject matter of al-Fārābī's works, formed a classified bibliography of his writings that consists of seven different head-titles, namely: Logic, Rhetoric and Poetry, Theory of Knowledge, Metaphysics and General



Philosophy, Physics, Music, and finally, Ethics and Political Philosophy. The total number of books listed by Rescher under the seven headings combined only comes to thirty-nine.<sup>13</sup> H.A. Maḥfūz, exploring all the possible early sources, and simply counting the titles of books which appear in them, compiled a list of one hundred and forty-five books.<sup>14</sup> A more critical bibliography is attempted by M.H. Āl-Yāsīn. Using only those of the original sources that were written before 1000H, he made a critical selection of one hundred and twenty-nine titles.<sup>15</sup> Excluding the books which he suggests are possibly already mentioned but reappear under a different title, one can reduce the number of books listed in his bibliography to one hundred and twelve.<sup>16</sup>

It is obvious from this exploration of early, as well as, modern sources that the attempted bibliographies of al-Fārābī's works differ drastically with respect to number. The process of recovering al-Fārābī's works, which extends from the medieval ages and continues into modern times, is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for this. However, a thorough examination of these bibliographies reveals that it is not the only reason. One can suggest three other possible explanations for the fluctuation in the number of al-Fārābī's books in the bibliographies. All three explanations relate to al-Fārābī's political works.

The first of these explanations is pointed to by H. Āl-Yāsīn. He observes that some bibliographers tend to extract parts of one and the same work and present it as a separate book. The example he gives is Tahsīl al-Sa'ādah (The Attainment of Happiness). He maintains that the Attainment of Happiness is the first part of a trilogy whose second part is The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle

and whose third part is Kitāb al-Ta'liqāt.<sup>17</sup> Maḥdī appears to agree with Yāsīn with regard to the fact that the Attainment of Happiness is part of a collective work. However, he makes the Philosophy of Plato and the Philosophy of Aristotle the second and third parts of the trilogy, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

The claim that the Attainment of Happiness is not a separate work finds support in the early sources. Šā'īd al-Andalusī mentions al-Fārābī's book the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, but not the Attainment of Happiness.<sup>19</sup> The first bibliography which included the titles of the two books in it was the one offered by al-Ghaznawī in Itmām al-Tatimah.<sup>20</sup> Then al-Qiftī included in his bibliography, in addition to the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, two other titles, Kitāb fī al-Sa'ādah al-Mawjūdah and Risālah Sammāhā Nail al-Sa'ādāt,<sup>21</sup> the second of which is claimed by J. Āl-Yāsīn to be nothing but the Attainment of Happiness.<sup>22</sup> The title, the Attainment of Happiness, or anything that resembles it, however, does not appear again in the medieval sources, not even in the elaborate bibliography of Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah who, it should be noted, lists the book the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this textual evidence, J. Yāsīn, in his introduction to the Attainment of Happiness, maintains that the book is an independent work.<sup>24</sup> Although fully aware of this textual evidence, he believes that more attention ought to be paid to the structure of the work itself, rather than the way in which it was listed in the original sources. He, thus, argues that the subject matter of the Attainment of Happiness does not relate to the two books that are supposed to be its second and third parts, namely, the Philosophy of Plato and the Philosophy of Aristotle.

He maintains that in the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī indicates the path the individual must follow to attain happiness and the steps required to bring about the emergence of the true philosopher, the most worthy to rule. Consequently, he goes on, the main thrust of the Attainment of Happiness is to introduce philosophy in depth as the only way to achieve true happiness. The concern of the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, he continues, is more exegetical. He, thus, concludes that from the point of view of content the Attainment of Happiness has little relation to the other two works. Yāsīn also argues that al-Fārābī's closing statement in the Attainment of Happiness that he will be discussing the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle to show that their systems have one and the same purpose need not refer to the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle but could be applicable to Kitāb al-Jam' bayn Ra'yay al-Hakimayn Aflatūn al-Ilāhī wa Aristūtālīs (Book of the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Wise Men Plato the Divine and Aristotle, hereafter cited as Harmonization).<sup>25</sup> It has to be noted that this latter argument has its weaknesses. First of all it is not entirely certain, as will be discussed a little later, that the Harmonization is, in fact, one of al-Fārābī's works. Secondly, if it is authentic, it is, most probably, a popular work which is not representative of al-Fārābī's actual thought, whereas the Attainment of Happiness is not a popular work.

Whether or not the Attainment of Happiness is part of a collective work is of extreme importance to settle the question of the actual number of al-Fārābī's works. However, what concerns us most here is the authenticity of the Attainment of Happiness as a work of al-Fārābī. It has to be noted that none of the authors

who argued about its relation to the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle has questioned its authenticity.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, there is no evidence, internal or external, to suggest that it was not written by al-Fārābī.

But if the authenticity of the Attainment of Happiness was never disputed despite the bibliographical problems that surround it, the authenticity of other books attributed to al-Fārābī is not at all certain. The addition of spurious books to some of al-Fārābī's bibliographical lists is the second possible reason for the fluctuation in the number of books from one bibliography to another. Fortunately for the students of al-Fārābī's political thought, none of his main political writings are among the suspected ones.<sup>27</sup> The epistle entitled al-Tanbīh 'alā sabīl al-Sa'ādah (Drawing Attention to the Path to Happiness; hereafter cited as: Path to Happiness), which is mentioned only in Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah's bibliography that was later reproduced by al-Ṣafadī, and which Dunlop doubts al-Fārābī ever wrote, is not a work in politics as its title might convey.<sup>28</sup> Some scholars obviously taking the title at its face value usually include it among al-Fārābī's political works.<sup>29</sup> However, Dunlop pointed out<sup>30</sup> and Mahdī argued convincingly that it is mainly a work on logic written as a first part of a collective work on logic whose second and third parts are al-Alfāz al-Musta'malah fi al-Mantiq (The Terms Used in Logic; hereafter cited as: Terms) and al-Maqūlāt (The Categories), respectively.<sup>31</sup> The same could be said of another epistle entitled Risālah fī al-Siyāsah (Treatise on Politics). This treatise appears nowhere in the original sources but in al-Ghaznawī's Itmām al-Tatimah.<sup>32</sup> Dunlop, without giving his reasons, expresses his suspicions that al-Fārābī is its author. What is

important here is that, despite its title, this treatise, according to Dunlop, is not a work in politics as it deals mainly with man's conduct towards his superiors, equals, etc.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most controversial books with regard to authenticity is the Harmonization. Although the book is not a work on politics in the strict sense, the attempt to settle its authenticity has some relevance to al-Fārābī's political thought. This is because of its close relation, as we shall see soon, to the discussion of the relation of metaphysics to politics in al-Fārābī's philosophy. The Harmonization, as its title suggests, is an attempt to reconcile the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Because the systems of the two Greek philosophers are greatly irreconcilable, al-Fārābī has been fiercely attacked by many scholars for this attempt. The reconciliation is based on a Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle. It reveals an acceptance of the authenticity of the Pseudo-Aristotelian books, the Theology of Aristotle and the Book of the World (Kitāb al-ʿĀlam).<sup>34</sup> However, the very same reasons that caused some scholars to attack al-Fārābī for writing the Harmonization, inspired others to question the authenticity of the book, or at least the true intentions of al-Fārābī in writing it.

Mahdī, Galston and Marmura observe that the Harmonization is in sharp contrast with other works of al-Fārābī where he gives either an exposition of or a commentary on the thought and works of Plato and Aristotle. In particular, it is quite different from his trilogy, the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Here al-Fārābī never refers to any of the books or doctrines usually associated with Neo-Platonism and his account of the systems of both philosophers is totally

devoid of the commonly accepted Neo-Platonic interpretations of their systems of thought. More important still is the fact that nowhere in this work does al-Fārābī try to reconcile the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>35</sup> Although it is true that in two different places in the trilogy he points out that the aim of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle is one and the same,<sup>36</sup> he also states that the paths both philosophers follow to achieve this same purpose are different.<sup>37</sup> The only place where a trace of Neo-Platonic emanative philosophy appears is in the Attainment of Happiness (claimed to be the first part of this work). But, it has to be noted that in the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī is presenting his own views. In fact, it has been pointed out by Marmura and Galston that the only works of al-Fārābī where Neo-Platonic emanative theory appears are those writings given in his own name, especially his political works.<sup>38</sup>

Because of this peculiar feature of the Harmonization and because its Arabic literary style and its mode of argument are not quite Farabian, Marmura expresses doubts about its authenticity.<sup>39</sup> It should perhaps be noted in this connection that the only reference to the Harmonization in the medieval bibliographies of al-Fārābī occurs in al-Ghaznawī's Itmām al-Tatimah and al-Qiftī's Ikhbār al-ʿUlamāʾ bi Akhbār al-Hukamāʾ, both composed in the seventh/thirteenth century,<sup>40</sup> that is, three centuries after al-Fārābī's death. Marmura argues that even if the work is authentic, its peculiar feature, at the very least, suggests that it was written as a popular work, that is, it does not convey the real opinions of al-Fārābī.<sup>41</sup>

Mahdī clings particularly to the latter view. He maintains that the Harmonization is an authentic work of al-Fārābī, yet, a work that was directed mainly to the public. He argues that the judgement on this book has to be passed in the light of al-Fārābī's general system of thought and after consulting what is available from his philosophical writings proper. This survey of al-Fārābī's philosophical works helps us conclude, Mahdī goes on, that al-Fārābī must have had an extensive knowledge of the works of both Plato and Aristotle. This in itself, Mahdī argues, would make it impossible to believe that al-Fārābī accepted the Theology of Aristotle as authentic. If one adds to this the fact that al-Fārābī's reasoning in the Harmonization is too flexible, Mahdī reasons, one can conclude that the Harmonization was directed mainly to the public. Indeed, Mahdī maintains that al-Fārābī in the Harmonization was particularly responding to the public claim that Aristotle's views regarding such issues as the creation of the world and the immortality of the soul differed from those of Plato and are in conflict with religious beliefs.<sup>42</sup>

Elaborating on this last point, Galston argues that the acquaintance of al-Fārābī with Neo-Platonic works and the presence of Neo-Platonic doctrines in some of his works should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that he was incapable of differentiating between Platonic, Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic teachings.<sup>43</sup> This is because, she argues, the examination of the available Farabian books reveals that Neo-Platonic ideas are present only in al-Fārābī's own works but are absent from his commentaries and accounts on Plato and Aristotle.<sup>44</sup> Because only one exception to this rule exists, namely the Harmonization, this

suggests, according to Galston's reasoning, that it was a popular work. She points out that al-Fārābī explicitly states that his purpose in writing the Harmonization is mainly to defend Aristotle against the attacks of his co-religionists.<sup>45</sup> Because Neoplatonic doctrines, she goes on, are more harmonious with the tenets of the revealed religions, she concludes that the Harmonization was a response on al-Fārābī's part to a specific practical consideration, and does not reveal any philosophical confusions on his part.<sup>46</sup> Galston, however, seems to go beyond this. Her argument seems to suggest that all Neo-Platonic doctrines in al-Fārābī's writings are meant for popular consumption and do not represent his real thought. This is an extreme position which, as we shall point out in discussing the relation between al-Fārābī's metaphysics and politics, is not very persuasive.

Although the question of whether or not the Harmonization is an authentic work of al-Fārābī remains unsettled, what the discussions of Marmura, Mahdi and Galston at the very least suggest is that the opinions of al-Fārābī expressed in this book should be studied cautiously and in the light of his other works before accepting them as representing the true beliefs of al-Fārābī.

If we turn now to the third possible explanation of why the number of al-Fārābī's books differs from one bibliography to the other, one can refer to the fact that some bibliographers mentioned the same book under two or more different titles.<sup>47</sup> Many examples of this case relate to al-Fārābī's political works. Al-Qiftī, as mentioned earlier, includes two different books in his list of al-Fārābī's works, one bears the title Kitāb fī al-Sa'ādah al-Mawjūdah and the other, Risālah Sammāhā Nail al-Sa'ādāt.<sup>48</sup> Most probably these two books are



one and the same and identical with the Attainment of Happiness, listed by his predecessor al-Ghaznawī.<sup>49</sup>

Al-Fārābī's renowned political work, the Political Regime, presents us with a second example. This book was first mentioned by Šā'id al-Andalusī then by al-Giftī.<sup>50</sup> A problem in listing this book starts to appear in Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah's bibliography. Although, most probably copying Šā'id's notes, he referred to the Political Regime as one of two books of al-Fārābī that have no equal, he returns when listing al-Fārābī's works to include a book entitled al-Siyāsāt al-Madaniyah (The Political Regimes) also known as Mabādi' al-Mawjūdāt (The Principles of Beings).<sup>51</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah's statement was apparently a source of confusion for some modern scholars. Farrūkh, for example, considers that al-Fārābī wrote two different books, one entitled the Political Regime and the other entitled the Political Regimes, giving, however, almost the same description of the contents of the supposedly two distinct books and commenting that they closely resemble al-Fārābī's other political work, the Virtuous City.<sup>52</sup>

Other scholars, more specifically Dunlop and F. Najjār, however, are more aware of the double entry made by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah. Dunlop points out, and Najjar argues quite convincingly, that there could not be two books and that the correct title should be the Political Regime, and not the Political Regimes.<sup>53</sup>

M.L. Jum'ah, however, raised another problem relating to this work, namely, that the Political Regime is nothing but the other famous Farabian political work, the Virtuous City.<sup>54</sup> It should perhaps be mentioned here that while Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah maintains that al-Fārābī started the Virtuous City in Baghdād,

continued it in Syria and made chapters and aphorisms of it in Egypt, Ibn Khallikān gave the same report, however, making this book not the Virtuous City but the Political Regime.<sup>55</sup> This difference in the report is undoubtedly due to the similarity between the two works. The similarity between them, however, does not mean that they are identical as a comparison of the two works shows and as scholars like Najjar strove to prove.<sup>56</sup>

The Virtuous City, however, raises other problems. The book was first referred to as late as the sixth/twelfth century when listed by al-Baihaqī in his two books Tārīkh Hukamā' al-Islām and Tatimat Siwān al-Hikmah under the title Ārā' al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (The Opinions of the Virtuous City).<sup>57</sup> This was reproduced by al-Ghaznawī in his Itmām al-Tatimah.<sup>58</sup> Al-Qiftī was the first to give the title as Ārā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City).<sup>59</sup> Yet, Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, who was mainly elaborating on al-Qiftī's list, refers to this book in a peculiar way. He gives two entries in his bibliography of al-Fārābī regarding this work. The first is to a book entitled Mabādī' Ārā' al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (The Principal Opinions of the Virtuous City).<sup>60</sup> In the second entry Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah refers to the "book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city. He (al-Fārābī) began the composition of this book in Baghdād and took it with him to Syria at the end of the year 330 A.H./941-2 A.D. He completed it in Damascus in the year 331/942-3, and wrote it out fair, after which he examined the manuscript and divided it into chapters (abwāb). Then someone asked him to give it sections (fūsūl), which would show the division of its subject matter,

so he made the sections in Egypt in the year 337/948-9. They are six in number.<sup>61</sup> Although Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm in his Irshād al-Qaṣid again like al-Qiftī, mentions one book entitled the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City,<sup>62</sup> al-Ṣafadī, who most probably was reproducing Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah gave the same two entries included in the latter's bibliography.<sup>63</sup>

It has almost been agreed upon that the book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city, is apparently the book we have now published under the title the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City.<sup>64</sup> But what about the other title which Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah included in his bibliography? Is it different from the book the Virtuous City or does Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah make a double entry for the same book as he did in the case of the Political Regime? In fact, with one single exception,<sup>65</sup> the modern scholars who investigated this problem tend to believe that the two books are different, yet related, works. Farrūkh maintains that the book published under the title the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City is composed of the two books: the Principal Opinions of the Virtuous City which forms its first part, and the book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city which forms its second part.<sup>66</sup>

But Farrūkh's words do not make it clear whether he thinks that the two books were combined by a later editor or whether this was intended by al-Fārābī himself. Mahdī, on the contrary, appears to believe that al-Fārābī actually wrote The Principal Opinions of the Virtuous City as an introduction to his other work popularly known as the Virtuous City and identifies it with

the work mentioned in Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah’s bibliography as the book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city.<sup>67</sup> Depending on Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah’s remark on this latter book to the effect that al-Fārābī started it in Baghdad, completed it in Syria and divided it into chapters and sections in Egypt, Maḥdī concludes that there is a third work by al-Fārābī entitled Fuṣūl Mabādī’ Ārā’ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (Sections of the Principal Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City<sup>68</sup>; hereafter cited as: Sections of the Virtuous City).

But Dunlop does not seem to agree with Maḥdī on this. He maintains that the sections of the Virtuous City referred to in Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah’s bibliography are nothing but the Political Regime itself. He refers here to the fact mentioned above that Ibn Khallikān includes the same information given in Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah’s passage about the book the Virtuous City, yet, replacing this with the book the Political Regime. He also attracts attention to the Hebrew manuscript of the Political Regime which is entitled The Six Principles, obviously alluding to the fact that Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah mentioned that the sections which al-Fārābī extracted from the Virtuous City were six in number. Although Dunlop observes that the text of the Political Regime is composed of twelve, and not six, sections, he insists that the occurrence of the expression “the six principles” at the beginning of the manuscript itself indicates that there is a relation, though not yet clear, between the twelve sections of the Political Regime and the six principles referred to in its introduction. This for him shows that the six sections which al-Fārābī extracted from the Virtuous City are nothing but the Political

Regime. This, he goes on, is further confirmed by the fact that the subject matter of the two books is the same and that their contents closely resemble each other.<sup>69</sup>

There is still a third work whose affinity with the Virtuous City is so close that they were thought to be the same work which was given two different titles. This is Kitāb al-Millāh (Book of Religion). References to this book in original bibliographies are very confusing.<sup>70</sup> This has caused some errors in the modern indexing of the manuscript of the book<sup>71</sup> and, in turn, lead to the confusion of some modern scholars concerning the true nature of this work.<sup>72</sup> Thanks to the efforts of scholars like M. Maḥdī, the matter has been clarified so that it is quite evident that the Virtuous City, the Political Regime and the Book of Religion, although closely related, are different works.<sup>73</sup>

Another book whose subject matter is closely related to both the Political Regime and the Virtuous City and which also has its bibliographical problems with regard to repetition is the book known as Fuṣūl al-Madanī (Aphorisms of the Statesman), according to Dunlop,<sup>74</sup> or Fuṣūl Muntaza‘ah (Selected Aphorisms), according to Najjār.<sup>75</sup> (This book will hereafter be cited as: Aphorisms). The original bibliographies of al-Fārābī's works contain four titles beginning with the term "sections". While al-Ghaznawī mentions just Kitāb al-Fuṣūl (Book of Sections),<sup>76</sup> al-Qiftī gives the title al-Fuṣūl al-Muntaza‘ah min al-Akḥbār (The Sections Extracted from the Reports).<sup>77</sup> Then came Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, and al-Ṣafadī after him, who included three new titles namely: Fuṣūl Falsafiyah Muntaza‘ah min Kutub al-Falāsifah (Philosophical Sections Extracted from the Books of the Philosophers), Fuṣūl lahu mim mā Jama‘ahu Min Kalām al-Qudamā’

(Sections of His from Among What He Collected from the Utterances of the Ancients), and Kitāb al-Fuṣūl al-Muntaza‘ah li al-Ijtimā‘āt (Book of the Extracted Sections about the Associations).<sup>78</sup>

Najjār admits that it is not easy to determine which is the correct title of the book.<sup>79</sup> M.H. Āl-Yāsīn thinks that the appropriate title should be the Book of the Extracted Sections About Associations. He also believes that the two titles: Sections Extracted from the Reports and Sections of His from Among What He Collected from the Utterances of the Ancients, refer to the same book, that is, they constitute a double entry.<sup>80</sup> Maḥdī also believes that the book we have now published under the title the Aphorisms could be identified with The Book of the Extracted Sections About Associations mentioned by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, he suggests that this book has a close relation with the Virtuous City, in the sense that it was written as an appendix (Ziyādāt) to it. Although he admits that it can be derived from Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah’s comment on the book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city, that al-Fārābī wrote only chapters and sections to this book, yet, Maḥdī refers to the fact that in two different places of the Sections of the Virtuous City al-Fārābī revealed his intention of writing an appendix to the Virtuous City. Maḥdī also points to the fact that al-Fārābī referred to at least two different issues in the Sections of the Virtuous City and mentioned that he would postpone their discussion to the appendix he was intending to write. Because they were actually discussed in the Aphorisms, Maḥdī concludes that the Aphorisms is most probably the appendix of the Virtuous City.<sup>82</sup>

Obviously, because Dunlop considered the Political Regime to be the "Sections", which al-Fārābī wrote to the Virtuous City, he was not in a situation to know about the reference to an appendix to the Virtuous City which comes in the actual "Sections" of the Virtuous City discovered and edited by Maḥdī. Thus, Dunlop, unlike Maḥdī, did not consider the possibility advanced by the latter that the Aphorisms could be an appendix written to the the Virtuous City.<sup>83</sup> However, he was able to observe that a close resemblance does exist between the subject matter of the Aphorisms, on the one hand, and the Virtuous City and the Political Regime, on the other. But despite this resemblance, Dunlop goes on, differences between these works can still be pointed out to show that they could not be considered as one and the same work. Dunlop maintains, for example, that in the Aphorisms one can notice a wider application of the art of government than can be found in either the Virtuous City or the Political Regime. Also, although the Aphorisms follows the same range of ideas given in the Virtuous City and the Political Regime, the arrangement of its content differs, as metaphysics comes in its second part whereas in the other two works metaphysics comes at the very beginning.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Dunlop argues that evidence can be advanced to show that the Virtuous City and the Political Regime were both composed before the Aphorisms, which was written, according to him, as a separate book towards the end of al-Fārābī's life. This will lead us to consider another problem related to al-Fārābī's political works, namely, their chronological order.

## **II The Problem of the Chronological Order of al-Fārābī's Political Works and the Relations of his Metaphysics to his Political Theories**

The medieval bibliographers of al-Fārābī, on the whole, were not very concerned with the chronology of his works and as such are not of great assistance in this matter. The modern scholars, on the other hand, are very much concerned with the question of chronology. This concern is in part due to the repetitiveness and similarity in al-Fārābī's writings which, as we have seen, led some scholars to confuse one work with the other. But there is also a more important reason. One would like to trace, if possible, the development of al-Fārābī's political thought. For although, by and large, there is remarkable cohesion in the views that he presents, there are also some differences. A knowledge of this chronology could help clarify this problem. But the task of establishing the chronological relation between his writings is not an easy one. What in our judgement are five of the most important attempts at arriving at a chronology of the writings of al-Fārābī will now be considered. Two of them have appeared in unpublished Master's theses.<sup>85</sup> However, they deserve consideration because they attempted an overall chronological view of most of al-Fārābī's works. What all these attempts share is their emphasis on the quest after happiness as a criteria for establishing this chronology. But this quest, though seemingly an ethical one, is, in the final analysis of al-Fārābī's system, metaphysical. It will be no exaggeration to say that it represents the underlying motif of his scheme. For this reason, the discussion of the relation of his metaphysics to his political theory is closely related to that of the chronology of his writings.



The first attempt to be considered here is suggested by E. Rosenthal. He emphasizes the fact that al-Fārābī's main concern in all his political writings was the problem of how to achieve true happiness. Looking for this factor in three of al-Fārābī's political works, namely the Virtuous City, the Political Regime and the Attainment of Happiness, Rosenthal tries to establish their chronological order. He observes that the Virtuous City gives the most detailed discussion of both the physical and metaphysical structure of the ideal regime where happiness can be attained. The Political Regime, on the contrary, although discussing man's theoretical reason, does not treat the subject of man's practical reason or imagination. It, thus, does not give as much space to revelation as is the case in the Virtuous City. Rosenthal suggests that the Political Regime must have been written after the Virtuous City. His rationale for this is that al-Fārābī who offered a full account in the Virtuous City did not feel obliged to give a second full account in the Political Regime. Following the same logic Rosenthal maintains that the Attainment of Happiness, which is the most concise work with regard to the concept of happiness, was written after the other two works. Here, al-Fārābī's main concern, Rosenthal argues, was not with the revelation of law as such, since this was already discussed in the two previous treatises, especially in the Virtuous City. In the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī was concerned mainly with the philosophical nature of the lawgiver himself and with what makes him an effective ruler. Drawing an analogy from the case of Plato, who wrote the Republic at an early stage and the Laws as a mature philosopher, Rosenthal concludes that al-Fārābī's the Virtuous City belongs to an early stage of al-Fārābī's career, followed by the Political Regime. The Attainment of Happiness,

which he considers the most mature Farabian work with regard to the concept of happiness, comes at a later stage.<sup>86</sup>

Rosenthal is the only scholar among the five considered by us here, to consider the Attainment of Happiness a late Farabian work. J. Āl-Yāsīn, for example, although agreeing with Rosenthal that the development of al-Fārābī's concept of happiness should act as the main criterion in arranging his political works, unlike Rosenthal, believes that the Attainment of Happiness belongs to an early period of al-Fārābī's literary activity. This is because, as Yāsīn believes, it is the key work which discusses what man needs, both as an individual and as a member of a society, in order to attain happiness in this life and the hereafter. All of al-Fārābī's literary output followed later, Yāsīn argues, simply to explain how this happiness can be attained. The Path to Happiness is, in his opinion, the work that immediately followed the Attainment of Happiness. This is because "tanbīh" is but attracting attention to a subject without going into details. These details were given, according to him, in the Attainment of Happiness. This was followed, he goes on, by al-Fārābī's logical writings. This is because, he argues, the attainment of happiness calls for the acquisition of true knowledge and this calls for intellectual discernment. After the logical writings which can help man nourish his intellectual powers, Yāsīn maintains that al-Fārābī moved to his philosophical writings proper. These, as Yāsīn specifies, are his accounts and commentaries on the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Then came, in Yāsīn's opinion, al-Fārābī's political works, the crown of which, according to him, is the Virtuous City which he believes to be one of the last, if not the last, works

of al-Fārābī.<sup>87</sup>

M. Shāhīn, unlike Yāsīn, believes that the Path to Happiness should be placed before the Attainment of Happiness because the former alludes to what comes in the latter. It also alludes to what comes in Ihsā' al-'Ulūm (The Enumeration of the Sciences). Shāhīn, thus, concludes that both the Attainment of Happiness and the Enumeration of the Sciences must have been written after the Path to Happiness but not necessarily directly after it. It seems that he agrees with Mahdī that the Path to Happiness is the first part of a work in logic whose second and third parts are the Terms and the Categories in that order. He, thus, concludes that these are the two works that directly followed the Path to Happiness and that after them came the Enumeration of the Sciences and the Attainment of Happiness. Because at the end of the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī declares his intention of writing about the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle in order to show that their philosophies do not differ, Shāhīn concludes that after the Attainment of Happiness came the Philosophy of Plato, the Philosophy of Aristotle and the Harmonization respectively. Then followed the Book of Religion in which al-Fārābī, as Shāhīn observes, put the design of the virtuous regime, a design which he actually implemented, according to Shāhīn, in the Political Regime. Shāhīn maintains that after writing the Political Regime al-Fārābī edited and classified it in what we now know as the Virtuous City. Apparently, he is here following Ibn Khallikān's account which, contrary to Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's, makes the Political Regime and not the Virtuous City, the book which al-Fārābī started in Baghdād, completed in Syria and later edited

and classified in Egypt. The last political works to be composed by al-Fārābī, according to Shāhīn, are the Aphorisms and the Treatise on Politics. He reasons that both reflect the realism of al-Fārābī, an aspect which could not have developed until he came into close contact with rulers and with political realities.<sup>88</sup> This argument that the Aphorisms is a late Farabian work because it reflects a Farabian realism that is lacking in his other political works is a re-echo of Dunlop's detailed discussion in this regard.

Dunlop maintains that the composition of the Aphorisms should be placed after 337/948-49. In order to argue for this dating he draws a parallelism between the content of the Aphorisms, on one hand, and the course of historic events in the Islamic State in the last ten years of al-Fārābī's life, on the other hand. Dunlop maintains that in the Aphorisms al-Fārābī speaks intensively about two concepts, namely: holy war (jihād) and the king according to the laws (malik al-sunnah).<sup>89</sup> Although one of the qualities of the ideal ruler mentioned in the Virtuous City, as Dunlop observes, is to acquire the physical strength necessary to perform his task, it is in the Aphorisms where this power is portrayed, not only as military, but mainly as related to holy military activities. In the Aphorisms al-Fārābī says that the ideal ruler should have the power to fight the holy war in person and to attend to the matters that relate to it. There is also a striking and rather long passage about the fighter for the faith (mūjāhid) in the second part of the book. Again in the Aphorisms, Dunlop continues, al-Fārābī speaks about the "king according to the laws" who is to rule in case an "ideal ruler" is lacking. Al-Fārābī assigns to this king the same six

characteristics he assigns to the second chief of the Virtuous City. But one has to observe, Dunlop maintains, that while in the Aphorisms al-Fārābī speaks of the ability of the "king according to the laws" to launch the holy war (jihād), in the Virtuous City he simply speaks of the second chief's ability to go to war (harb). This leads Dunlop to conclude that, when writing the Aphorisms, al-Fārābī must have had the holy war in particular on his mind and not simply war.<sup>90</sup> A third important point which Dunlop observes in the Aphorisms is al-Fārābī's insistence, after referring to the disasters caused by misrule, on the duty of the virtuous man to emigrate and leave the corrupt regime.<sup>91</sup>

Now, Dunlop suggests that these distinct ideas that appear in the Aphorisms must have been dictated by the historical circumstances that prevailed during the time of its composition. Reviewing the historical events of the last ten years of al-Fārābī's life, that is between 330/941-42 and 339/950, he observes that the situation in Baghdād was very bad, to the extent that in the year 330/941-42 the Caliph al-Muttaqī appealed to the Hamdanids of Mūṣil for protection. In 333/944-45 - 334/945-46 Saif al-Dawlah al-Ḥamdānī, for a time governor of Wāsiṭ, occupied Aleppo, Ḥimṣ and Damascus successively. He, thus, became the leading political figure in northern Syri and started engaging in campaigns against the Byzantines. These campaigns started to take a serious course in 337/948-49 and culminated in 339/950 when he actually raided Greek territory. Although Aleppo was lost to the Byzantines in 351/962, Dunlop observes that al-Fārābī was dead by that time. Considering this course of events Dunlop concludes that al-Fārābī's departure from Baghdād to Syria in 330/941-42 (the same year al-Muttaqī appealed

to the Hamdanids who escorted him to Baghdād and obtained honorary titles) was his personal emigration from the corrupt regime to the virtuous city (Syria). Sayf al-Dawlah, Dunlop goes on, was the "king according to the laws" who was able to exercise the political power which the caliph lacked. His campaigns against the Byzantines, most unusual at this period of decline in the Islamic empire, must have been the reason, Dunlop argues, that contributed to the shift in al-Fārābī's concerns, witnessed in the Aphorisms, from general references to war to an insistence on holy war in particular. Dunlop concludes that all this can help place the composition of the Aphorisms after 337/948-49, that is, after Sayf al-Dawlah rose as the champion of Islam because of his campaigns against the Byzantines that culminated from 337/948-49 onward.<sup>92</sup>

As for the Virtuous City and the Political Regime, Dunlop follows Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah's account to establish their period of composition. He, thus, maintains that the Virtuous City was started in Baghdād and was completed in Syria in 331/942-3. As for the Political Regime, he believes that it was composed from the Virtuous City and completed in Egypt in 337/948-49.<sup>93</sup>

As for the Attainment of Happiness, again, unlike Rosenthal, Dunlop maintains that it belongs to an early period of al-Fārābī's literary career, certainly earlier than the Aphorisms. In this regard he points to the fact that the Aphorisms quotes from the Attainment of Happiness. He also draws attention to the fact that in the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī reveals his intention to write about the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. This promise was actually fulfilled and the two accounts were composed. He, thus, argues that the Attainment

of Happiness could not have been written after the Aphorisms because al-Fārābī could not have had enough time between 337/948-49 (time of writing the Aphorisms) and 339/950 (time of his death) for all this literary activity (that is, the Attainment of Happiness, the Philosophy of Plato and the Philosophy of Aristotle). That the Attainment of Happiness preceded the Virtuous City (and, hence, the Political Regime) is a view strongly supported by Dunlop because of the fact that the Attainment of Happiness was rarely, if ever, referred to in subsequent Arabic works. This for him means that it was followed by the Virtuous City that considerably eclipsed it.<sup>94</sup>

N. Yūsuf, in her attempt to arrange al-Fārābī's works, again gives great attention to the theme of tracing the concept of happiness in al-Fārābī's works. She maintains that al-Fārābī, throughout all his political writings, was concerned with one fundamental question: how can man attain happiness. The answer al-Fārābī offered, she goes on, is that happiness can only be attained in a society whose ruler is a true philosopher who has achieved his own intellectual perfection and who is hence able to guide people to their own kind of happiness, each according to this own capacity. Because the solution to a problem, Yūsuf argues, normally comes after the problem itself is well investigated, she divides al-Fārābī's works into two broad categories. The first category consists of those of al-Fārābī's writings which deal with the concept of happiness, on one hand, and political science, on the other hand, as the science whose ultimate end is to help man attain happiness. The writings included in this category preceded, in Yūsuf's opinion, the writings in the second category which includes those works

that investigate the virtuous regime where happiness can be attained.<sup>95</sup>

In the first category, she believes (in agreement with Shāhīn) that the Path to Happiness was composed first. The last work in this category is the Attainment of Happiness which, following Rosenthal, she believes to be the most mature and comprehensive of al-Fārābī's works about happiness. Between these two books fall the Terms, the Categories, the Enumeration of the Sciences and the Book of Religion, in that order. She accepts Mahdī's opinion, referred to above, with regard to the arrangement of the Terms and the Categories. She argues that the Book of Religion was composed after the Enumeration of the Sciences because even though it includes discussions in political science similar to those found in chapter five of the Enumeration of the Sciences, it also includes in addition to this what can be considered a brief sketch of the virtuous city and its ruler.<sup>96</sup>

Yūsuf then moves to the second category of al-Fārābī's political works. She starts her discussion by making the general observation that the works of this category seldom discuss happiness per se because it was already dealt with in the works included in the previous category. In the political writings of this second category, al-Fārābī is, thus, concerned not with the concept of happiness itself but with the medium in which happiness can be attained. The first work that belongs to this second category, she believes, is the Virtuous City. Like Dunlop, and contrary to Shāhīn's view, she accepts Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah's statement and holds that al-Fārābī started the Virtuous City in Baghdād and completed it in Syria in 331/942-3. The Political Regime, she goes on, was composed



from the Virtuous City in Egypt six years later in 337/948. She argues that Shāhīn's view that the book of the ideal city, the ignorant city, the unrighteous city, the altered city and the deluded city is the Political Regime and not the Virtuous City is wrong. This is because, as she observes, the Altered City is discussed by al-Fārābī in the Virtuous City but not in the Political Regime. The last two works in this second category, she goes on, are the Aphorisms and the Treatise on Politics (the authenticity of which she, like Shāhīn and contrary to Dunlop's judgement, seems to believe in). She holds that they were both composed towards the end of al-Fārābī's life because they reveal al-Fārābī's emancipation from the idealism of philosophy and reflect his close contact with political realities.<sup>97</sup>

When reviewing these several attempts to make a chronological list of al-Fārābī's works, it becomes obvious how complicated this problem is. In this regard, I. Madkour's opinion should be noted. Relying on Ibn Khallikān's account that al-Fārābī composed most of his books while in Baghdad,<sup>98</sup> Madkour maintains that al-Fārābī's literary output, in general, was produced in the last thirty years of his life, that is, when he was a fully mature philosopher. This means, according to Madkour, that there could have hardly been any noticeable changes in al-Fārābī's thought that can be traced in his writings. He, thus, concludes that there is no true value in trying to form chronological lists of his works.<sup>99</sup>

Madkour does not give us his sources for maintaining that al-Fārābī arrived at Baghdad thirty years before his death. We know, however, with more certainty, that al-Fārābī's political works belong to a late stage of his career. Yāsīn, as well as Maḥdī, holds that al-Fārābī's logical works were generally

composed before his political writings. Yāsin argues that al-Fārābī the logician was incited to write his political treatises only when the political situation in Baghdād greatly deteriorated, apparently during the last decade of al-Fārābī's life.<sup>100</sup> Mahdī is more precise and thus argues that al-Fārābī's Kitāb al-Hurūf (Book of Letters) acts as the boundary between the two stages of his literary career, that is, the stage of al-Fārābī the logician and philosopher proper and al-Fārābī the political thinker. Because Mahdī showed in his introduction to the Book of Letters that this book was written after 320/932<sup>101</sup> this means that al-Fārābī's political works were all written between sometime after 320/932 and 339/950.

If Madkour's argument is to be applied in the case of al-Fārābī's political writings, one would say that in a short period of twenty years no substantial changes in al-Fārābī's political thought could have taken place and hence there is no need to try to establish the chronological order of these works. This, however, is not quite true. Although, as mentioned earlier, al-Fārābī's philosophical system as a whole is highly coherent, different positions on some particular issues can be traced in various texts. His political writings are no exception. As we shall see in the chapter discussing his political philosophy, the existence of different ideas in different works cannot be denied. Unlike Madkour, H. Davidson believes that these differences denote a certain development in al-Fārābī's thought. He suggests that this development could have been the result of al-Fārābī's acquaintance, at different times, with different oral and written sources that were presented to him by the unknown teachers with whom he studied.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the value of the effort undertaken to determine the chronological order of al-Fārābī's writings, in general, and his political writings, in particular, should not be undermined. However, it can be extracted from the discussion of the five attempts presented here, that this is not an easy task. For although the scholars, whose attempts are considered in this thesis, put almost the same emphasis on one and the same theme when arranging al-Fārābī's works, the chronological lists they offer differ considerably. Thus, while according to Rosenthal, for example, the Attainment of Happiness follows both the Virtuous City and the Political Regime, Yāsīn considers the Attainment of Happiness to be the first of al-Fārābī's works. It is followed, according to Yāsīn, by the Path to Happiness while the Virtuous City is considered by him to be the last of al-Fārābī's literary works. According to Yūsuf, on the other hand, the Path to Happiness comes before the Attainment of Happiness and the Virtuous City is followed by at least three other works, the Political Regime, the Aphorisms and the Treatise on Politics. Thus, faced with the complicated problem of chronology and the discrepancies among the existing attempts, one should try and benefit from these attempts by indicating those views upon which there is general agreement.

Drawing on these views, one can conclude that al-Fārābī's political writings came in a late stage of his literary career, most probably in the last twenty years of his life. It seems that the concentration of his efforts on producing political literature was provoked by the rapidly deteriorating political situation in the Islamic empire during this period.<sup>103</sup> The Attainment of Happiness was

written, more or less, during the same period as the Virtuous City and the Political Regime. These three works address the same problem, the realization of the ideal regime where happiness can be attained. The themes and views these three works reflect are uniform despite the fact that the Attainment of Happiness places more emphasis on the nature, the training and the role of the supreme ruler than on the characteristics of the ideal regime itself as is the case in the other two works. The Aphorisms and the Book of Religion most probably belong to a later period. The fact, for example, that they both discuss in detail the notion of the "King according to the law," which was only alluded to in the Political Regime suggests that a) they both belong to the same period and b) they represent a development in al-Fārābī's political thought that came after the period of writing the Political Regime.

Finally, it should be remarked that the theories attributing greater realism to some of al-Fārābī's writings due to his encounter with the realities of Islamic political life are mere theories. They do not, in the final analysis, give us any conclusive answer to the question of chronology. However, the other point raised by Yūsuf regarding the Aphorisms, that it is a late work which reflects al-Fārābī's realism because metaphysics is introduced at its end,<sup>104</sup> suggests that in this work al-Fārābī gives less importance to metaphysics. Even if this were true, it need not mean diminishing the importance of metaphysics to the understanding of his political system. It rather indicates the primary subject matter of the book in question. What is important is that there is no contradiction between the metaphysics presented in the Aphorisms and that found in the Virtuous

City or the Political Regime, for example. This brings us to the question of the relation of metaphysics to politics in al-Fārābī's thought.

As we have seen, all indications suggest that al-Fārābī's political writings proper belong to a late stage in his career. Although the bulk of his writings (particularly when we regard his detailed commentaries on Aristotle) are not political, compared to his other writings, much more, and maybe even all, of his political works have survived. As we have also noted, the Neo-Platonism encountered in his political writings has posed a problem. It may be worthwhile summing up this issue here.

The issue has arisen, in part, with the question of whether or not al-Fārābī's Harmonization is an authentic work and, if it is, whether it represents his real views. Some scholars,<sup>105</sup> as we have seen, have suggested that since the Harmonization, at best, does not represent al-Fārābī's real point of view, then the Neo-Platonism in his other works also does not represent his real views and hence the works in which this Neo-Platonism appears are popular works meant for public consumption.

Before we come to the history of this type of interpretation, it is important at this stage to make a distinction between al-Fārābī as a commentator and al-Fārābī as a philosopher in his own right. Thus, it may well be the case -- and as we have indicated earlier there is evidence to support this -- that al-Fārābī was well aware that the Theology of Aristotle was not an authentic Aristotelian work. But this does not mean that he himself did not find the emanative Neo-Platonic ideas in this and similar works philosophically useful and

that he himself developed them for philosophical purposes and not simply to please the public.

The idea that al-Fārābī included the Neo-Platonic emanative theory in those political works he wrote for the public was first suggested by Leo Strauss. In this connection one must express the debt we owe to this scholar and others influenced by him for bringing home the importance of al-Fārābī as the foremost political philosopher in Islam. One, however, may not always fully agree with Strauss' analysis. But before summing up some of his views -- and we shall concentrate on what he says in an early work, Persecution and the Art of Writing, since this forms the basis for what he says about al-Fārābī elsewhere<sup>106</sup> -- it is necessary to point out the relation of al-Fārābī's metaphysics to his political philosophy, accepting for the moment that his political ideas are ideas he actually upholds.

Al-Fārābī's political philosophy is introduced within a Neo-Platonic emanative cosmology. However, his political theory is also Aristotelian in the sense that it stresses the notion of real essence that exists objectively in things. Thus, al-Fārābī holds that there is a real essence of happiness which can be known. This doctrine which is ultimately ethical and political is founded on an ontology which is Aristotelian. As will be seen when discussing al-Fārābī's philosophy in more detail, it is when the leadership of a community fails to grasp the true nature of happiness or when it deliberately foresakes it that we find political communities that are not virtuous.

Again the ideal political system, according to al-Fārābī -- as will be discussed in greater detail later -- is patterned on the structure of the universe. This structure is emanative, hierarchical, rational and harmonious. Beings descend from a supreme principle forming a hierarchy of principles. Any understanding of his political views that does not take into account this emanative, hierarchical cosmology is bound, as will become evident, to distort this political philosophy.

Closely related to this emanative cosmology is al-Fārābī's psychology. To begin with, man himself is a microcosm. But more to the point, it is in terms of his psychology that his theory of prophecy and the religious language associated with it have to be understood. To be sure, the fundamentals of his theory of the soul derive from Aristotle's De Anima. But there is also the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the Active Intellect from which prophetic knowledge emanates. The reason why we are mentioning very briefly at this stage how al-Fārābī's politics, psychology and metaphysics are closely intertwined and how Neo-Platonic, as well as Aristotelian, elements can be found in al-Fārābī's political scheme, is to indicate the type of philosophy which Strauss considers "popular" and not an expression of al-Fārābī's real views.

In his brief, but very influential, introduction to his Persecution and the Art of Writing, Strauss makes a number of valid observations, from which, however, he draws certain conclusions which are not secure against criticism. He observes quite validly that the Attainment of Happiness is the first part of the trilogy entitled the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. He also observes that while in the Attainment of Happiness al-Fārābī speaks of happiness as attainable in this

world and the next, there is no mention of or allusion to the hereafter in his discussion of the Philosophy of Plato. From this he draws one conclusion, namely that al-Fārābī's statement regarding the hereafter in the Attainment of Happiness is meant as a public statement, not expressing his real views.<sup>107</sup>

In order to validate his point of view, Strauss stresses the fact that neither the account of the philosophy of Plato nor that of Aristotle makes any mention of the hereafter. This he also finds very peculiar to al-Fārābī's summaries of several Platonian dialogues such as the Phaedo and the Republic where the hereafter is also never mentioned. He also draws attention to the statement of Ibn Ṭufayl that in his commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, al-Fārābī referred to the belief in the soul's immortality as "ravings and old women's tales."<sup>108</sup>

Strauss then states that in the Virtuous City and the Political Regime, where al-Fārābī is not expounding the views of others but is speaking in his own name, one can observe that the hereafter is mentioned. This, to him, suggests that al-Fārābī made use of the immunity of the commentator in order to express his true beliefs concerning serious religious matters in his commentaries and summaries of the dialogues, rather than in the works, usually political, in which he speaks in his own name. In other words, Strauss maintains that al-Fārābī's own political works where orthodox views are pronounced are for public consumption. The Neo-Platonism that appears in them is singularly a device to reconcile philosophy and religious law and thus to make philosophy publicly acceptable.<sup>109</sup>



To answer Strauss' points we start with the Attainment of Happiness. In the first place, the Attainment of Happiness is a very difficult book, hardly one that would be addressed to the general public. In fact, there is no reason to suppose that al-Fārābī's reference to happiness in the hereafter does not represent his real views.

To turn to the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and the summaries and dialogues, we find much that is extremely curious. What is perhaps as striking as the absence of any mention of the soul's immortality in these works, is that there is no mention of Plato's theory of ideas either. Now, when comparing the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, the two areas where the differences between the two philosophers are really evident have to do with the theory of ideas, on the one hand, and the problem of the soul's immortality, on the other. One of the purposes of al-Fārābī's accounts of and commentaries on Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies, one has to remember, is to show that the two philosophers share the same views as far as happiness is concerned. Hence, an explanation as to why the immortality of the soul, as well as the theory of ideas, is hardly mentioned in these works is that al-Fārābī omitted those views which he probably felt were not relevant to what he really wanted to do, that is to minimize the differences between Plato and Aristotle. This does not necessarily imply that he himself did not believe in the immortality of the soul.

The statement of Ibn Ṭufayl poses a problem. All we have here is the report of Ibn Ṭufayl. We have neither the original text nor the context in which the statement attributed to al-Fārābī was made. But even if in that work al-

Fārābī did deny the soul's immortality, this may well represent only a stage in his thinking.<sup>110</sup>

If we turn to the theme of the soul's immortality, as expressed in al-Fārābī's own writings, and examine it in the Virtuous City, for example, we find that this work a) denies bodily resurrection and b) denies the immortality of the majority of mankind, those who dwell in the ignorant cities.<sup>111</sup> Both these teachings, it has to be noted, are totally opposed to Islamic teachings, which leaves Strauss' view that this work, among other Fārābian works, represents al-Fārābī's conformity with Islamic beliefs devoid of its real value. But above and beyond this there is a metaphysical and epistemological reason for al-Fārābī's denial of immortality to people of the ignorant cities. This is intimately connected with his theory of the soul, which, according to him, attains an immaterial status at a certain stage of conceptualization. Those who have not attained this stage live with material souls which are corruptible. Now this is a highly sophisticated theory cleverly interwoven with a sophisticated psychology, hardly intended for the masses. Moreover, the emanative scheme which we encounter in the Virtuous City and the Political Regime is also philosophically difficult to understand and is not likely intended for the public.

Strauss makes another interesting point which should be noted. This is that al-Fārābī's acceptance of Plato's method of teaching which forbids addressing the masses in a philosophical way means that al-Fārābī believed, like Plato, in the gradual realization of the virtuous regime. Until the ideal regime is brought about, Strauss goes on, the philosopher should conform with the opinions held

by the majority. Meanwhile, he should try and suggest to the masses what points towards the truth without boldly contradicting prevailing accepted opinions. In the light of this, Strauss maintains that it is unwise to identify the true teachings of the philosophers with what they taught in their popular works.<sup>112</sup>

It is thus, Strauss argues, that the bulk of al-Fārābī's philosophy is to be found in his political works where exoteric orthodox teachings are found. Political philosophy, he goes on, represents the only possible armor in which the whole of philosophy can appear to the non-philosophical masses. Al-Fārābī, Strauss suggests, wanted to teach the masses the truth. But because he believed he should not do this in a philosophical language, he presented it in comprehensive books, where exoteric teachings that included only an approximation to the truth are adopted and where conformity with the opinions of the religious community is stressed. Here, prophecy and revelation, according to Strauss, were discussed within a political framework. This, in turn, allowed a fairly safe introduction of metaphysics to the masses. It is again in this context that Strauss warns against accepting the Neo-Platonism provided in al-Fārābī's political "public" works as representing his real views.<sup>113</sup>

Although the analogy Strauss draws between al-Fārābī and Plato as trying to educate the public to a higher philosophical understanding is interesting, it is again very speculative. As one reads al-Fārābī, one is mostly impressed by the fact that he tends to speak in mostly universal terms, to theorize, and to avoid reference to the particular Islamic milieu in which he lived. If, in fact, he was attempting to draw the public gradually to a philosophical understanding,

he would speak to them in terms of the particulars with which they were most familiar, these being the particulars of their daily Islamic tradition.

Hence, the conclusions which Strauss draws are highly questionable. The emanative metaphysics which we encounter in al-Fārābī's writings is given within his political philosophy and thus neither can be really understood without the other. To be sure, there is the question of emphasis. Is the main thrust of al-Fārābī's philosophy political or metaphysical? This depends on which works are taken as most representative of his thought. If the Aphorisms, for example, is taken as the most representative of his thought, beginning with politics and ending up with metaphysics, one finds that the emphasis here is on the political aspect of his thought. But, one must keep in mind that, whether or not such a book is the most representative of al-Fārābī's political thought, his political theory still cannot be dissociated from his metaphysics. His political philosophy has to be understood within a metaphysical framework which is both Aristotelian and emanative. It is thus to his political philosophy that we now turn.

## ENDNOTES

1. See Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, ʿUyūn, 3:224-25, 226.
2. See Introduction, n. 149.
3. See pp. 81-83 below.
4. It is true that al-Fārābī referred once in his Risālah fī al-ʿAql to Muʿāwiyah; but, as far as it is known, this is the only reference in any of his published works to a known figure. Moreover, the reference is not to a contemporary figure and the context in which it occurs is not political. See Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī [Alfarabī], Risālat fī l-ʿAql, complete Arabic text partly edited and entitled by Maurice Bouyges, *Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum: Serie Arabe*, vol. 8 (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, n.d.), p. 5 (hereafter cited as ʿAql).
5. Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:321-22.
6. The books that are not listed by Ibn al-Nadīm are: Aghrād Falsafat Aflātūn wa Aristatalis, al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyyah and al-Sīrah al-Fādilah. The book listed in the two biographies is Marātib al-ʿUlūm, now known as Ihsāʾ al-ʿUlūm. See Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:321; Ṣāʿid, Tabaqāt, pp. 71-72.
7. Ḥaḥīr al-Dīn al-Baihaqī, Tārīkh Hukamāʾ al-Islām, 2nd ed., edited by Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Mufīd al-Jadīdah, 1976), p. 31 (hereafter cited as Hukamāʾ); ʿAlī ibn Zaid [Ḥaḥīr al-Dīn] al-Baihaqī, Tatīmma Siwān al-Hikma, ed. Moḥammad Shafīʿ, Punjāb University Oriental Publications, no. 20 (Lahore: L. Ishwar Das, 1939), p. 17 (hereafter cited as Tatimmah).
8. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām al-Tatimah (hereafter cited as Itmām), quoted in the appendices and additions to al-Baihaqī, Tatimmah, pp. 184-85.
9. ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf al-Qiftī, Ikhbār al-ʿUlamāʾ bi Akhbār al-Hukamāʾ (Cairo, 1325 H.), pp. 183-84 (hereafter cited as Ikhbār).

10. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:229-33.
11. See, for example, the list of al-Ṣafadī, al-Wafī, 1:108-11.
12. Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, 2 vols. (Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898-1902), 1:210-13; Supplementband I (Leiden, 1937), pp. 375-77, 957-58 (hereafter cited as Litteratur).
13. Nicholas Rescher, al-Fārābī: An Annotated Bibliography (England: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), pp. 41-47 (hereafter cited as Bibliography).
14. Ḥusayn ‘Alī Maḥfūz, al-Fārābī fī al-Marāji‘ al-‘Arabiyyah [al-Farabi in Arabic Sources] (Baghdād: Dar al-Ḥurriyah li al-Ṭibā‘ah, 1975), pp. 21-27 (hereafter cited as al-Marāji‘). For a list of the modern bibliographies of al-Fārābī's works, see Rescher, Bibliography, p. 53; Maḥfūz, al-Marāji‘, p. 402.
15. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn, introduction to Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam, by Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān al-Fārābī, al-Jam‘iyyah al-Islāmiyyah li al-Khadamāt al-Thiqāfiyyah (Baghdād: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1976), pp. 11-23 (hereafter cited as Fuṣūṣ).
16. For examples of these check, Yāsīn, introduction to Fuṣūṣ, pp. 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, book nos. 8, 9, 11, 16, 26, 28, 32, 33, 56, 66, 82, 83, 100, 110, 113, 120, 124.
17. Ibid., p. 11. Note that Kitāb al-Ta‘līqāt appears in al-Baihaqī's two works, Hukamā‘, p. 31; Tatimmat, p. 17.
18. Muhsin Mahdi, introduction to The Attainment of Happiness, by Alfarabī, trans. Muhsin Mahdi, in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds. with the collaboration of Ernest L. Fortin, Medieval Political Philosophy (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, Cornell Paperbacks, 1963), p. 58 (hereafter cited as Attainment); Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, trans. with an introduction by Muhsin Mahdi, Agora Editions (U.S.A.: The Free Press of Glencoe, a division of the Macmillan Co., 1962), pp. 3-10 (hereafter cited as Plato and Aristotle).

19. Šā'id, Tabaqāt, pp. 71-72.
20. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185.
21. Al-Qiftī, Ikhbār, pp. 183, 184.
22. Ja'far Āl Yāsīn, introduction to Kitāb Tahsīl al-Sa'ādah, by al-Fārābī (n.p.: Dār al-Andalus li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', n.d.), p. 14 (hereafter cited as TS).
23. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, 'Uyūn, 3:223-33.
24. Yāsīn, introduction to TS, p. 17.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-21.
26. It is true that Y. Maḥdawī, in his bibliography of Ibn Sinā's writings, includes a work entitled Tahsīl al-Sa'ādah; but Yāsīn, pointing out the fact that the subject matter of the two treatises is totally different, maintains that there is no relation between the two works other than the similarity in title. See Yāsīn, introduction to TS, p. 15.
27. One must mention here two works whose authenticity is doubtful, namely Du'ā' 'Azīm and Fuṣūs al-Hikam. Although neither is strictly a political work they have some relevance to the thesis. In Du'ā' 'Azīm the expression the 'brethren of purity' appears, but this is no indication that the reference is to the particular group with which we are concerned. Moreover, there are good reasons to question the authenticity of this work. It was never included in the original lists of al-Fārābī's works and the du'ā' itself in its textual form was first quoted by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah more than three centuries after al-Fārābī's death. One must also note that the style is not Farabian and terms like "Wājib al-Wujūd" are Avicennian. For the text, see "Du'ā' 'Azīm." in Abu Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb al-Millāh wa Nuṣūs Ukhrā, ed. Muḥsin Maḥdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968), pp. 87-92 (hereafter cited as KM). See also Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, 'Uyūn, 3:226-27.

Turning to Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam, Hijāb, who claims that al-Fārābī came after the Brethren and was influenced by them, maintains that in the Fuṣūṣ al-qalam is spoken of as one of God's angels, an idea that occurs in the Epistles. Again the coincidence of these two ideas is hardly sufficient to establish who influenced who, if there is any considerable influence regarding their cosmological views at all. Moreover, the authenticity of the Fuṣūṣ has been seriously questioned by a number of scholars, notably, S. Pines, "Ibn Sīna et l'Auteur de la Risalat al-Fusus Fi'l Hikam," REI (1951):121-24; K. Goerr, "Fārābī est-il l'auteur des Foṣṣūṣ," REI (1941-49):31-39.

28. Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, p. 7. See Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, Uyūn, 3:232; al-Ṣafādī, al-Wafī, 1:109.
29. Yāsīn, introduction to TS, p. 20; Niveen 'Abd al-Khālīq Muṣṭafā Yūsuf, "Abu Naṣr al-Fārābī: Dirāsah Taḥlīliyah li Fikrihi al-Siyāsī. Dirāsah fī al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī" (Master's dissertation, Cairo University, 1977), p. 102 (hereafter cited as al-Fārābī).
30. Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, p. 7.
31. Muḥsin Mahdī, introduction to Kitāb al-Alfāz al-Musta'malah fī al-Mantiq by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, al-Maṭba'ah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1968), pp. 25-26 (hereafter cited as Alfāz).
32. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
34. See Alber Naṣrī Nadir, introduction to Kitāb al-Jam' bayna Ra'yay al-Hakimayn by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1960), pp. 75-76, 77 (hereafter cited as al-Jam'); Fakhrī, Islamic Philosophy, p. 115; De Boer, History, pp. 109-10; 'Umar Farrūkh, al-Fārābiyyān: al-Fārābī wa Ibn Sīnā, 2nd ed., Dirāsāt Qaṣīrah fī al-Adab wa al-Tārīkh wa al-Falsafah, no. 10 (Beirut: Maktabat Munayminah, 1950), pp. 11, 18-19 (hereafter cited as Fārābiyyān).



35. Mahdi, introduction to Plato and Aristotle, pp. 3-4, 5-6; Miriam Galston, "A Re-examination of al-Fārābī's Neo-Platonism," Journal of the History of Philosophy 15 (1977):15 (hereafter cited as Re-examination); Michael Marmura, "Die Islamische Philosophie des Mittelalters," in W.M. Watt and Michael Marmura, Der Islam II Politische Entwicklungen und theologische Konzepte (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhamner, 1985), p. 347 (hereafter cited as Der Islam).
36. TS, pp. 97-98; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 50, 71.
37. Plato and Aristotle, p. 71.
38. Marmura, Der Islam, p. 347; Galston, Re-examination, p. 31.
39. Marmura, Der Islam, p. 347.
40. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185, where it is referred to as Itifāq Ra'yay al-Hakīmāyn; al-Qiftī, Ikhbar, p. 183, where it is referred to as Kitāb fī Itifāq Ārā' Aristūtālīs wa Aflātūn.
41. Marmura, Der Islam, p. 347.
42. Mahdī, introduction to Plato and Aristotle, pp. 4-6.
43. Galston, Re-examination, pp. 14, 30.
44. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
45. Ibid., p. 31.
46. Ibid.
47. See, for example, the list offered by Yāsīn in his introduction to Fusūs, pp. 12-23. Also refer to n. 16 above.
48. Al-Qiftī, Ikhbar, pp. 183-84.
49. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185.
50. Šā'īd, Tabaqāt, pp. 71-72; al-Qiftī, Ikhbar, p. 184.

51. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:230.
52. Farrūkh, Fārābiyyān, pp. 14-15.
53. Dunlop maintains that the publication of the book under the title al-Siyāsāt al-Madaniyah in Hyderabad in 1346/1927 is nothing but a reproduction of Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah's old mistake. Najjar, referring to the fact that other early sources mention only one book that is entitled al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyah, holds that Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah made a double entry for one and the same book and that the correct title is al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyah. For their detailed discussion, see Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, p. 7; Fawzy Mirtī Najjar, introduction to Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-Madaniyah [Mabādī’ al-Mawjūdāt] by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kathūlikiyah, 1964), pp. 11-13 (hereafter cited as Siyāsah).
54. Muḥammad Luṭfī Jum‘ah, Tārīkh Falāsifat al-Islām fī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1927), pp. 21-22.
55. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:230; Abū al-‘Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Khallikān, Wafiyāt al-A‘yān wa Anbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān, ed. Muḥammad Muḥiy al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 6 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1948), 4:240 (hereafter cited as Wafiyāt).
56. For Najjar's argument, see his introduction to Siyāsah, pp. 16-19. An interesting explanation for the reason why some of al-Fārābī's works are incomplete or repetitive is offered by Ibn Khallikān and al-Ṣafadī. Ibn Khallikān claims that al-Fārābī used to write in the gardens and that he used to write on separate sheets of paper, seldom in notebooks, and that this is the reason why many of his writings that reached us are incomplete. Al-Ṣafadī seems to follow Ibn Khallikān in maintaining that al-Fārābī used to write in the gardens, adding that he used to fall asleep while writing and that the wind often carried the papers and dispersed them. See Ibn Khallikān, Wafiyāt, 4:240; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi, 1:107.

57. Al-Baihaqī, Hukamā', p. 31; al-Baihaqī, Tatimmat, p. 17.
58. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185.
59. Al-Giftī, Ikhbār, p. 183.
60. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah, 'Uyūn, 3:230.
61. Ibid., 3:230. The translation is by Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, p. 11.
62. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sā'id al-Anṣārī al-Singārī (d. 749/1348), Irshād al-Qāṣid ilā Asnā al-Maqāṣid, quoted in Maḥfūz, al-Marāji', p. 132.
63. Al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi, 1:108, 109.
64. Note that Yūsuf remarks that this book could not be the Political Regime because the latter does not include a discussion of the altered city (al-madīnah al-mubaddalah), which the book the Virtuous City does. See Yūsuf, al-Farabī, p. 104.
65. Yāsīn, introduction to Fusūs, p. 12. He maintains that the two books, the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City and the Principal Opinions of the Virtuous City, are but one and the same book and that they have nothing to do with the book of the ideal city.
66. Farrūkh, Fārābiyyān, pp. 13-14.
67. Maḥdī, introduction to KM, p. 45.
68. Ibid., pp. 28-29. See the text itself, pp. 79-86.
69. Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, pp. 11-13.
70. Ṣā'id al-Andalusī, for example, mentions that al-Fārābī has two books pertaining to divine science and political science that have no equal, namely Kitāb al-Sīrah al-Fādilah (the Book of the Virtuous Way of Life) and Kitāb al-Siyāṣah al-Madaniyah (the Political Regime) respectively. This statement was later copied by both al-Giftī and Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah. But Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'ah includes also in his list a book entitled, Kalam fī al-Millah wa al-Fiqh: Madanī (Speeches About Religion and Jurisprudence: Political). This

was later reproduced by al-Şafadī. Ibn Ṭufayl, in his introduction to Hayy ibn Yaqzān mentions among al-Fārābī's books that reached him, Kitāb al-Millāh al-Fādilah (the Virtuous Religion) where, as Ibn Ṭufayl says, al-Fārābī maintains that evil souls will be eternally doomed. But, as Maḥdī observes, this Fārābian view comes, not in the Book of Religion, but in the Political Regime and the Virtuous City. Again, Mūsā Ibn 'Azrā, as Maḥdī remarks, in a book written between 1130-1140 A.D., extracts a passage from a book by al-Fārābī which he identifies as the Virtuous Religion, when in fact this passage comes from the Political Regime. See Şā'id, Tabaqāt, pp. 71-72; al-Qiftī, Ikhbār, p. 182; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, Uyun, 3:226-27, 230; al-Şafadī, al-Wāfī, 1:109; Abū Bakr ibn Ṭufayl, Hayy Ibn Yaqzān, ed. Alber Naṣrī Nadir (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kathūlikīyah, 1963), pp. 21-22; Maḥdī, introduction to KM, pp. 13-14.

71. For a discussion of the different MSS of the book and the different titles they present, see Maḥdī, introduction to KM, pp. 15-20.
72. Farrūkh, for example, tends to believe that the Virtuous Way of Life, the Virtuous Religion and the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City are three different titles for one and the same book. See Farrūkh, Fārābiyyān, p. 13.
73. For Maḥdī's discussion of the resemblances, as well as, the differences that exist between the Book of Religion and other works of al-Fārābī, see Maḥdī, introduction to KM, pp. 11-13.
74. For Dunlop's preference of the title Fuṣūl al-Madani, see Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, p. 9, n. 1.
75. For Najjār's preference of the title Fuṣūl Muntaza'ah, see Fawzy Mitri Najjār, introduction to Fuṣūl Muntaza'an by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), pp. 10-13 (hereafter cited as FM).
76. Al-Ghaznawī, Itmām, p. 185.

77. Al-Qiftī, Ikhbār, p. 184.
78. Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:230, 231, 232; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī, 1:109, 110.
79. Najjar, introduction to FM, pp. 12-13.
80. Yāsīn, introduction to Fuṣūṣ, p. 19.
81. Mahdī, introduction to KM, p. 31.
82. See Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah, ‘Uyūn, 3:229. For Mahdī’s argument, see Mahdī, introduction to KM, pp. 28-29, 30-31.
83. Dunlop, however, considered, but rejected, the possibility that Fuṣūl al-Madanī could be the Fuṣūl referred to by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘ah as being written by al-Fārābī as chapters to the Virtuous City. See, for this argument, Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, pp. 10-12.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
85. Yūsuf, al-Fārābī, pp. 92-105; Muṣṭafā Shāhīn, “Falsafat al-Fārābī al-Siyāsiyah” (Master’s dissertation, Cairo University, 1976), pp. 118-24 (hereafter cited as “Falsafat al-Fārābī”).
86. Rosenthal, Political Thought, pp. 141-42; Erwin I.J. Rosenthal, “The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of al-Fārābī,” IC 29 (1955):164ff.
87. Yāsīn, introduction to TS, pp. 19-21.
88. Shāhīn, “Falsafat al-Fārābī,” pp. 119-23.
89. Note that Dunlop claims that the term “malik al-sunnah” is introduced in the Aphorisms and that it “apparently occur[s] nowhere else in his political writings.” However, it should be remarked that the term appears in passing in the Political Regime and that a more detailed discussion of the concept is to be found in the Book of Religion. Because Dunlop edited the Aphorisms in 1961, that is, three years before the publishing of the Political Regime and seven years before the publishing of the Book of Religion, he, most probably, was not aware of this fact. See Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms,

- p. 13; Siyāṣah, p. 81; KM, pp. 56, 60.
90. Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, pp. 13-14.
  91. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
  92. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.
  93. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
  94. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
  95. Yūsuf, al-Fārābī, pp. 99-100.
  96. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-03. Note that, like Shāhīn, she also maintains that the Philosophy of Plato and the Philosophy of Aristotle, as well as the Harmonization, followed the Attainment.
  97. Yūsuf, al-Fārābī, pp. 103-05.
  98. Ibn Khallikān, Wafiyāt, 4:240. This was also mentioned by al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī, 1:107-08 and in Ibn al-Wardī, Tārikh, 1:394.
  99. Ibrahim Madkour, "al-Fārābī," in M.M. Sharif ed., A History of Muslim Philosophy, 1:453.
  100. Yāsīn, introduction to TS, p. 16.
  101. Mahdī, introduction to KH, pp. 43-39.
  102. Herbert A. Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies 3 (1972):153-54 (hereafter cited as "intellect").
  103. For the deteriorating situation in the central provinces during the first half of the fourth/tenth century, see above, pp. 14-18.
  104. See Yūsuf, al-Fārābī, pp. 103-04.
  105. See the views of Mahdī and Galston above, pp. 66-69.
  106. These views are particularly included in, Leo Strauss, "How Fārābī read Plato's Laws," in Institut Français de Damas, Melanges Louis Massignon, vol. 3 (Damascus, 1957), pp. 319-44.

107. Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952), pp. 13-14 (hereafter cited as Persecution).
108. Ibid., p. 14; Ibn Ṭufayl, Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān, p. 21.
109. Strauss, Persecution, pp. 9-10, 14.
110. See Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 152-54.
111. Abu Naṣr al-Fārābī, Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah, ed. Alber Naṣrī Nadir (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kathūlīkiyah, 1959), pp. 114-15, 118ff. (hereafter cited as VC).
112. Strauss, Persecution, pp. 15-17.
113. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE POLITICAL THEORY OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ

Although Ibn al-Nadīm cites the titles of a dozen treatises by al-Kindī which he describes as political,<sup>1</sup> the indication from what has been published of these works is that they are works of ethics rather than of politics.<sup>2</sup> Again there are in the extant writings of the physician-philosopher al-Razī statements that have political implications. But they do not constitute a systematically worked-out political philosophy. Al-Fārābī, undoubtedly, was the first Muslim philosopher to construct an elaborate political theory many of whose basic features were later adopted by his philosopher successors, not excluding the Brethren. However, unlike the Brethren, whose political ideas are scattered and incidental, al-Fārābī was a real system-builder. In more than one separate book and treatise he laid down the foundations of Platonic political thought in Islam and his political theory is quite noted for its completeness and its integration with the whole of his philosophical system.

In this theory al-Fārābī is mainly concerned with the highest end of the political association. Under Platonic influence he maintains that this end is the good, that is, to attain happiness in this life and in the hereafter. But the achievement of this goal calls for the existence of a ruler who is himself good and virtuous. Prophecy and revelation were interpreted within this framework. Al-Fārābī's conception of religion is at the heart of his political theory. And because the ideas involved here bear heavily on his metaphysics and psychology, the formation of his political theory, in effect, develops into a complete, coherent and fully-integrated philosophical system. Thus, for his political philosophy to



be appropriately understood, it has to be studied in terms of the other components of his philosophical scheme, namely his metaphysics and psychology.

### I Metaphysics and Cosmology

The metaphysics of al-Fārābī and the cosmology to which it relates are not mere abstract theories but are highly relevant to his political thought. Al-Fārābī, under Aristotelian inspiration, defines metaphysics as knowledge of the existent in as much as it exists. This, according to al-Fārābī, means that the various classes of being have specific natures that belong to them objectively.<sup>3</sup> As referred to earlier, al-Fārābī maintains that one of the requirements of the leadership of the virtuous regime is to possess a superior theoretical intellect by which it can acquire knowledge of the objective specific natures of beings. As we shall shortly see, it is when the leaderships of communities totally lack this theoretical knowledge, or intentionally pervert it, or mistake the specific nature of one thing for another, that their societies fail to meet the ideal norms and hence non-virtuous states emerge.

Again, the theoretical knowledge possessed by the leaders, according to al-Fārābī, allows them to attain perfect knowledge of the cosmic order.<sup>4</sup> Al-Fārābī stresses the analogy between the cosmos and the virtuous city. Because for him "political associations and the totality that results from the association of citizens in cities correspond to the association of the bodies that constitute the totality of the world,"<sup>5</sup> the hierarchy and the harmony of the universe must act as the model on which the leaders ought to organize their societies. It is

this rational harmonious social structure that permits the attainment of true happiness in this life and the next. The attainment of happiness is the underlying theme of al-Fārābī's whole political philosophy. It is when the leader lacks knowledge of the structure of the universe that he fails to emulate the cosmic order in organizing the society into various ranks each performing the function most appropriate to it, each serving a higher level, and all submitting to the rule of reason represented by the supreme ruler.<sup>6</sup> This failure to imitate the likeness of the cosmos in the city will result in the rise of ignorant, non-virtuous regimes.

Thirdly, al-Fārābī holds that the heavenly bodies affect the world of generation-corruption in a number of ways. One of these activities, according to al-Fārābī, is the determination of man's make-up and humors which, in their turn, either hinder or facilitate man's union with the Active Intellect, i.e. his ability to attain happiness.<sup>7</sup> However, it has to be made quite clear that, although al-Fārābī states that the natural phenomena might facilitate for man the accomplishment of what he has dispositions for, they do not, in themselves, coerce him to do any particular act.<sup>8</sup> It follows that, as Th.-A. Druart puts it, the world by itself is neither good nor bad and that man has the moral obligation of bringing a perfect world into being.<sup>9</sup> This is again the task of the supreme ruler who by virtue of his theoretical intellect acquires perfect theoretical knowledge of the heavenly bodies and of what they grant. He should thus try to benefit from what is useful and, if possible, to transfer the harmful into useful or, if this is impossible, to try to either remove or diminish what is

harmful.<sup>10</sup> Without this theoretical knowledge of the heavenly bodies, the leader of the community will not be able to determine what must and can be done in order for the virtuous city to be realized. Thus, non-virtuous states will emerge instead.

It now becomes clear how relevant al-Fārābī's metaphysics and cosmology are to his political thought. To turn now to a discussion of his metaphysical and cosmological themes the first thing to note is that he holds that the structure of the universe is harmonious and rational. All things emanate from the One of Plotinus, identified by al-Fārābī with the God of revelation whom he calls the First. God, according to al-Fārābī, is self-sufficient and not in need of another for His existence or subsistence. He is also quite unique by His essence and by virtue of this unity of His essence He exists.<sup>11</sup> But if God is self-sufficient and possesses unity what is then the relation between Him and the universe and how do the many proceed from Him? In order to understand the solution offered by al-Fārābī for this problem we have to know that al-Fārābī conceived God as the First cause of all things not simply in the sense that He is the cause of movement but mainly in the sense that all other existents proceed from Him.<sup>12</sup> It is here where al-Fārābī introduced a very systematic account of the emanation of things from the First Being.

God, according to al-Fārābī, is neither matter nor associated with matter hence He is pure intellect. Moreover, He requires no agency to conceive His essence and thus He is eternally engaged in contemplating Himself. He is thought thinking itself.<sup>13</sup> This eternal act of self-knowledge is a creative act as well which results

in the emanation of a first intelligence. From this first intelligence multiplicity starts.

This first intelligence is capable of conceiving both God and itself. By virtue of the first act of cognition a second intelligence emanates and by virtue of the second act of cognition the body of the starless outermost sphere of the world emanates. The second intelligence now undergoes the same dual process of cognition. Hence, by virtue of conceiving God, a third intelligence flows from it, and by virtue of conceiving itself, there proceeds from it the sphere of the fixed stars. This chain of emanations goes on until the rest of the ten celestial intelligences terminating with the Active Intellect and the corresponding heavenly spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury terminating with the sphere of the moon emanate. With the emanation of the Active Intellect and the sphere of the moon the heavenly region ends and the terrestrial world starts.<sup>14</sup>

Following the symmetry of the Farabian cosmological scheme, one should have expected the tenth intelligence, the Active Intellect, to act as the emanating cause of another sphere consisting of a body and an intelligence which in this case would be the body of the sublunar world and the intellects existing in this world. But al-Fārābī assigns the function of producing both the matter and forms in the terrestrial world to the heavenly bodies, reserving instead for the Active Intellect the role of only actualizing the human intellect whose appearance as a potentiality is again, as al-Fārābī maintains, due to the action of the heavenly bodies.<sup>15</sup>

As with the chain of heavenly intelligences and bodies, the terrestrial world is also hierarchical. But unlike the heavenly region, the progress of development in the terrestrial world is reversed: from the imperfect the more perfect arises. The lowest level of terrestrial existence is prime matter. Prime matter, according to al-Fārābī, originates from the circular motion of the heavenly bodies.<sup>16</sup> Bodies in the terrestrial world, although all having prime matter, differ in their substances. This difference is a necessary outcome of the differences in substance within the heavenly bodies themselves. Moreover, the differences in the speed and the relative positions of the celestial bodies and their interaction give rise to the different terrestrial forms and their temporal successions.<sup>17</sup> Thus, after the prime matter common to all material existents had originated and the four elements had followed, these elements combined, by virtue of the interaction of the forces descending from the heavenly bodies, with forces within the lower world (those forces, it has to be remembered, are themselves dependent on powers descending from the celestial region), to give rise to a variety of forms that ascend in the order of being from the simple to the more complex until they reach man.<sup>18</sup>

The terrestrial hierarchical process of development attains its highest point with man. But within this species "man", and by virtue of the different rational capabilities of men, a new hierarchy arises whose highest perfection manifests itself in the philosopher-prophet, who, as we shall see, is the founder and the first ruler of the virtuous city. In al-Fārābī's hierarchical system he is very much the link between the terrestrial and the celestial worlds. This link is achieved

through the prophetic "conjunction" with the Active Intellect. To see what this means, we must turn to al-Fārābī's psychology and the theory of knowledge related to it.

## II Psychology, Epistemology and Theory of Prophecy

According to al-Fārābī, the human soul consists of several faculties or powers. The first faculty to emerge is the vegetative, followed respectively by the sensitive, the imaginative (representative) and the rational. The order of gradation of these faculties corresponds to their order of generation and hence all the faculties of the soul are subordinate to the rational which must rule and order them all.<sup>19</sup> This rational faculty is at first a potentiality, that is, a disposition to become actually rational. As a potentiality, it is material and thus is incapable by itself of effecting its transition from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality. For this process of actualization to take place, the rational faculty needs an agent that is itself separate from matter. This incorporeal agent, according to al-Fārābī, is the Active Intellect.<sup>20</sup>

Man acquires knowledge through three faculties: sensation, imagination and reason. Through sensation the soul receives material images. The imaginative faculty, which stands in an intermediary position between the sensitive and the rational faculties, preserves the sensible impressions it receives from the sensitive faculty and either combines or separates them to form a complex sensible image. These images can then be rendered abstract by the illuminary action of the Active Intellect. Here al-Fārābī employs the Aristotelian example of the action of light

on colours in order to describe how the Active Intellect operates. The sun, al-Fārābī explains, imparts light which makes the potential sight actually seeing, the potentially visible colours actually visible and the sun itself visible to the eye. Likewise, al-Fārābī continues, the Active Intellect emits "something" similar to the light of the sun which turns the potential intellect into actualized intellect and the potentially intelligible thoughts into actually intelligible ones. It also makes the human intellect capable of perceiving both this "something," as well as its source, that is, the Active Intellect itself.<sup>21</sup>

This illuminary action of the Active Intellect transfers the sensible impressions stored in the imaginative faculty into abstract thoughts in the rational faculty. The first intelligibles that arise from this action are: (a) the primary principles of geometrical knowledge; (b) the primary principles of ethical knowledge; and (c) the primary principles of metaphysical knowledge.<sup>22</sup> When these intelligibles are abstracted (that is, when they are brought from potentiality to actuality), and are conveyed to the rational faculty, the rational faculty, hitherto an intellect in potentiality (‘aql bi al-quwwah), a disposition for thought only capable of abstracting the forms of existing entities, becomes the actualized intellect (al-‘aql al-munfa‘il) where the intelligibles are now actually abstracted, becoming object of thought in the actualized intellect. The rational faculty can still attain a higher stage when the actualized intellect becomes the object of its own apprehension, thereby reaching the stage of acquired intellect (al-‘aql al-mustafād). This stage is described by al-Fārābī as the highest level the human intellect can reach and as the closest in degree to the Active Intellect.<sup>23</sup>

Reaching the stage of the acquired intellect is the ultimate intellectual perfection possible for man. Acquiring this ultimate perfection is, according to al-Fārābī, identical with attaining the supreme happiness in this life and in the hereafter. This is because immaterial forms are the only objects of apprehension at this stage of acquired intellect. To this category belong the actual intelligibles that are no more associated with matter after being stripped of sensibles by the actualized intellect, the immaterial forms that are never associated with matter and the acquired intellect itself qua being immaterial.<sup>24</sup> Because the acquired intellect can thus dispense with matter, it becomes similar to the incorporeal beings that require no matter for their existence. But the ability to exist independently of matter simply means immortality. By attaining the state of acquired intellect, which is the state of immortality, the rational soul becomes itself immortal. Hence, the rational souls that succeed in actualizing their potentialities separate from the bodies (the matter) after death to enjoy supreme happiness in an eternal state of intellectual contemplation.<sup>25</sup> But what about the other souls that fell short of actualizing the potential intellect before the body dies? Their fate in the hereafter, according to al-Fārābī, depends on the type of political regime to which they belonged during their earthly existence. Only the souls of the citizens of the virtuous regime do live in eternal bliss after separating from the body.<sup>26</sup>

But in the virtuous city only the few are capable of attaining intellectual knowledge and hence knowledge of true happiness. How is it then that all its inhabitants enjoy eternal bliss? Al-Fārābī does not give a very explicit answer



to this question. An answer can, however, be extracted from his theory of prophethood and how it relates to his political philosophy. What he seems to be saying is that members of the virtuous city have knowledge of true happiness, but that each has it at a level commensurate with the level of his understanding, for the intellectual capabilities of man differ and the object of knowledge can thus be understood on different levels. What al-Fārābī wants to stress here is that inhabitants of the virtuous city have knowledge of what is in reality happiness, even though the degree and nature of this knowledge may vary.<sup>27</sup> They all know that happiness does not consist of bestial pleasures, power, wealth or any other material needs. Hence, they all enjoy moral integrity, each performing the role most appropriate to his capabilities within a rational social order.<sup>28</sup> Although this is the kind of answer the texts provide, admittedly it does not solve all the difficulties that arise from this issue. For, according to al-Fārābī's psychology and epistemology, the soul that enjoys eternal bliss must have achieved a measure of abstract, intellectual knowledge that renders it immaterial and hence immortal. This apparently contradicts his notion that the masses of the virtuous city who follow moral virtues but are unable to acquire intellectual knowledge of the true nature of things will be saved by virtue of their moral integrity.

At any rate, al-Fārābī maintains that to acquire this true knowledge, at whatever level, requires a teacher and a guide who makes known to people what true happiness is, what the pre-requisites necessary for attaining it are and arouses them to fulfill these pre-requisites.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, this teacher and guide must not need to be guided by anyone in anything at all. He must possess

an excellent comprehension of divine and human things, that is, he must have achieved the fullest development of his rational faculty, theoretical and practical alike. This happens when, being provided with the primary intelligibles by the Active Intellect, he employs this primary stage of intellectual perfection to step from it to his ultimate perfection, that is, to move from the state of actualized intellect to the state of acquired intellect.<sup>30</sup> Because each stage of human intellect acts as the matter for the higher stage, at the stage of acquired intellect, the human intellect serves as the matter for the Active Intellect which in its turn acts as the form for the acquired intellect. Hence all barriers between the acquired intellect and the Active Intellect disappear. At this stage, al-Fārābī describes, the acquired intellect "unites with" and "conjoins with" the Active Intellect and the Active Intellect indwells in the human intellect.<sup>31</sup> This is what al-Fārābī calls revelation.

He explains that, when the actualized intellect becomes the matter of the acquired intellect and when the acquired intellect becomes the matter of the Active Intellect, a certain power emanates from the Active Intellect to the actualized intellect through the mediation of the acquired intellect. By virtue of this emanation from the Active Intellect this individual becomes capable of knowing what true happiness is and of knowing the things necessary for attaining it. And because the ultimate source of the Active Intellect is the First Cause, al-Fārābī continues, it can be said that the ultimate source of this revelation is the First Cause Himself, yet through the mediation of the Active Intellect.<sup>32</sup>

But because, as mentioned earlier, people differ in their intellectual abilities and most men are incapable of conceiving things intellectually, this teacher and guide must also have the ability to adequately present the masses with an imitation of the rational account of happiness which he should reserve only for the elite. Hence, this teacher must not only be the one who has reached the ultimate stage of theoretical and practical rational perfection, but must also be endowed with an exceptionally strong imaginative faculty. The imaginative faculty, al-Fārābī holds, stands below the rational faculty and serves it. It has three functions: a) it retains the impressions it receives from the sensitive faculty after the disappearance of the objects of sensation; b) it separates and combines the sensible impressions, forming new and complex images; and c) it also produces imitations of things that do not relate to sensible objects like passions and temperament, through combining different sensible impressions and then forming figurative images out of them.<sup>33</sup>

The function of the imaginative faculty is closely related to al-Fārābī's division, after Aristotle, of the rational faculty into theoretical and practical. The function of the theoretical faculty is the acquisition of abstract universal truths. The practical faculty, on the other hand, is essentially a deliberative faculty which is involved with the judgement of particular events, present and future.<sup>34</sup> The imaginative faculty, al-Fārābī explains, has access to these two kinds of knowledge yet in a different manner. To take theoretical knowledge first, al-Fārābī holds that, although the imaginative faculty receives this knowledge, it does not receive it in its intelligible, intellectual form. For as a

non-intellectual faculty it cannot acquire these abstract intelligibles. It can, however, produce images that "imitate" them, that represent them symbolically. On the other hand, knowledge of particular present and future events can be received by the imaginative faculty as they are, for these are not abstract intelligibles. Sometimes, however, it also does imitate them, forming sensory images that symbolize them. But, whereas al-Fārābī insists that the practical rational faculty acquires the knowledge of these particular events through "deliberation" (al-rawiyah), he is quite vague as to how the imaginative faculty arrives at this knowledge. He is, however, quite clear in stating that the imaginative faculty does not use deliberation to acquire practical knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

Now, according to al-Fārābī and as in the case with the rational faculty, the access of the imaginative faculty to these two types of knowledge (i.e. the abstract knowledge and knowledge of particular events) is made possible through the action of the Active Intellect. He writes that some of the light-like thing which emits from the Active Intellect onto the rational faculty might overflow on the imaginative faculty because it acquires a position adjoining the rational theoretical and the rational practical faculties. As a result, the Active Intellect gives the imaginative faculty: a) abstract intelligibles which it receives through reformulating them into figurative images thereby giving rise to "divinations (kahānāt) in divine matters"; and b) particular present and future events which it receives either as they are or by imitating them, thereby giving rise to a true dream or vision concerning practical matters.<sup>36</sup>

Normally, the imagination has access to these two kinds of knowledge when the body is asleep. For then it is neither busy receiving sensations from the sensitive faculty nor occupied with serving the rational faculty. There, however, are rare instances when knowledge comes to the imaginative faculty while the individual is awake. This happens when the imaginative faculty is so strong that, although busy receiving the sensitive faculty and serving the rational faculty, it still has enough power to enable it to perform its own specific functions as well. In those instances the imaginative faculty receives from the Active Intellect, while the body is awake, abstract and particular knowledge and then projects them or their imitations, through the faculty of vision into the external world. The person who has such a strong imagination can thus perceive what the Active Intellect gives him as if they are outside him. By virtue of this phenomenon, this individual possesses "prophecy in divine matters." This, al-Fārābī writes, "is the most perfect stage to which the imaginative faculty can reach and the most perfect stage at which man arrives by virtue of his imaginative faculty."<sup>37</sup> By virtue of what this individual receives through his perfect imaginative faculty he can instruct the masses in a language that befits their intellectual capabilities. He, first, makes them comprehend abstract intelligibles by helping them imagine these things through the similitudes that imitate them. Secondly, he makes the masses assent to what they comprehend through employing persuasive, not demonstrative, arguments.<sup>38</sup>

### III Political Philosophy

Thus far we have seen that al-Fārābī's true happiness depends on the acquisition of the highest stage of theoretical perfection; moreover, that since men are incapable of attaining this kind of knowledge without aid, the necessity arises for a teacher who would make known to them what happiness is (in a language they can comprehend) and arouse them to do the things that would bring it about. Because happiness is identified by al-Fārābī as the good desired for itself and its attainment as the purpose for which man is created,<sup>39</sup> he holds the leadership which brings about the realization of happiness to the community to be the virtuous leadership.<sup>40</sup>

#### A. The First Virtuous Leader:

In considering the nature of political leadership, al-Fārābī maintains that people differ not only in the kind of knowledge they acquire, but also with respect to the number of conclusions inferred from the known premises and the span of time it takes them to arrive at such conclusions. They also differ, he continues, in the facility by which they convey to others what they have themselves learnt and the ability to guide others to a certain thing and to arouse them to do it. This results in an inevitable hierarchical structure of leadership. At the lowest level are those who cannot exert any leadership and can only serve. At the next higher level are those who lead the lowest level, but who themselves need to be lead by a yet higher level. In this manner, al-Fārābī explains, each man, with the exception of individuals belonging to the very lowest level who are only ruled,

becomes a ruler to those beneath him but is ruled by someone above him. The progression ascends to the highest leader, who is not lead by any other mortal. In other words, as we ascend from the lowest to the highest levels of leadership, we are in fact ascending from a less perfect type of leadership to a more perfect one until we arrive at the highest level above which there can be no other level of leadership.<sup>41</sup> This leader is the source of all power and knowledge in the regime. Al-Fārābī writes:

"... the supreme ruler without qualification is he who does not need anyone to rule him in anything whatever, but has actually acquired the sciences and every kind of knowledge, and has no need of a man to guide him in anything. He is able to comprehend well each one of the particular things that he ought to do. He is able to guide well all others to everything in which he instructs them, to employ all those who do any of the acts for which they are equipped, and to determine, define, and direct these acts toward happiness."<sup>42</sup>

Al-Fārābī holds that this leader is the cause (al-sabab) for the existence of the virtuous regime (if it should exist) and that the existence of such a regime presupposes the existence of this virtuous ruler, but not the converse.<sup>43</sup> In the effort to bring about the virtuous regime by helping those ruled by him achieve true happiness, this leader ought to undertake three tasks.

The first task pertains to the internal organization of the state. As stated earlier, the need for this organization is due to the variance in levels of ability of its citizens and the different ranks of leadership, or, to use al-Fārābī's words, because "the ranks of order among the citizens of the city, as regards ruling and serving, vary in excellence according to their natural dispositions and

according to the habits of character they have formed."<sup>44</sup> Because the supreme ruler is the most perfect member of the regime, he ought to be the principle of organization. He must assign positions to the various inhabitants, each according to his merit, either in a subservient or in a ruling position. Here al-Fārābī draws an analogy between the role of the supreme ruler and the role of the First Cause, or God, who is Himself the first ruler and the cause of all existing things.<sup>45</sup> Just as God orders the universe in such a way that there is a dependence of each of its parts upon the others and where, despite the multiplicity of the existing things, all these pursue one aim, the supreme ruler must order the city in the same way so that its inhabitants cooperate, despite their multiplicity, in order to achieve the one aim intended by man's existence, that is, the attainment of happiness.<sup>46</sup> Taking the universe as his pattern, he must order the city in a harmonious and hierarchical structure with every individual allotted the place best fitted to his capabilities. Some, the more perfect, should be closer to him than the less perfect. All ought to follow in their activities what he prescribes in order to achieve his purpose each according to his rank in the hierarchy. The result is a regime that runs smoothly as one working unit because when "the supreme ruler wishes to issue a command about a certain matter that he wishes to enjoin the citizens of the city or a certain group among them to do, and to arouse them toward it, he intimates this to the ranks closest to him, these will hand it on to their subordinates, and so forth, until it reaches down to those assigned to execute that matter." The ultimate aim of this internal organization is the well-being of the all.<sup>47</sup>



The second task of the supreme ruler is to strive to eliminate evil from the city. Because happiness is "the good without qualification" its achievement calls for the disappearance of all evil, natural and voluntary.<sup>48</sup> Natural evil, al-Fārābī maintains, has its origin in the celestial bodies. As mentioned earlier, according to al-Fārābī, the celestial bodies give the human bodies their form and matter. The Active Intellect, on the other hand, affects the human intellect by giving man a faculty or a principle by which he is able to seek his intellectual perfection<sup>49</sup> which is identical with ultimate happiness. Sometimes, however, al-Fārābī explains, the celestial bodies can interfere with the role of the Active Intellect in perfecting the human intellect. In these instances, they hamper the function of the Active Intellect and, thus, obstruct the individual's way to happiness. The result is natural evil. But when doing this, al-Fārābī comments, the celestial bodies are not obstructing the way to happiness intentionally. It is the function of the celestial bodies (and it is inherent in their substance) "to give all that it is in the nature of matter to receive, without concerning themselves with whether it contributes to, or harms, the purpose of the Active Intellect."<sup>50</sup> Sometimes it happens that what is produced by the celestial bodies comprises that which is unfavourable to the purpose of the Active Intellect.<sup>51</sup> In these instances, al-Fārābī states, it is the duty of the supreme ruler to seek to reverse this natural evil. Al-Fārābī, however, is quite vague as to how the supreme ruler could achieve such a task. His language, at best, suggests that the supreme ruler should employ here the science of astronomy. Thus, al-Fārābī writes: "he [the supreme ruler] should inquire into everything given by the celestial bodies. Those of them that are in any way helpful and suitable, or in any way

useful, in the achievement of happiness, he should maintain and emphasize, those of them that are harmful he should try to turn into useful things; and those of them that cannot be turned into useful things he should destroy or reduce in power."<sup>52</sup>

Voluntary evil, on the other hand, has its origin in man himself. Because good is the perfection of the theoretical rational faculty, evil, al-Fārābī maintains, is the negligence to achieve this perfection. Al-Fārābī holds that there is only one way to bring about voluntary good. This is when man arrives at the knowledge of happiness using his theoretical rational faculty, in particular, but none of the other faculties of the soul. Man arrives at this by first using the primary principles of knowledge given to him by the Active Intellect. After knowing what happiness is, he then desires it by his appetitive faculty and this arouses him to use his practical rational faculty to deliberate upon the things he must do in order to attain it. His imaginative and sensitive faculties will then move him to do the actions he discovered by deliberation. Hence, all what this man does will be good.<sup>53</sup> In contrast to this, voluntary evil comes about when man neglects his duty to make use of his theoretical rational faculty in order to arrive at the knowledge of true happiness. Any of his other faculties, such as the imaginative or the appetitive, will then make him substitute something other than true happiness, things like honour or domination, as the ultimate aim of his life. This individual will then desire this false end by the appetitive faculty, will deliberate upon the actions that will enable him to achieve it by the practical rational faculty, will use the instruments of the appetitive faculty to do these actions

and will be assisted in all this by the imaginative and the sensitive faculties. Alternatively, al-Fārābī goes on, an individual might actually use his theoretical rational faculty to arrive at the knowledge of true happiness, but does not make happiness his end. Instead, he uses all his faculties in order to attain an end other than it. In either case, al-Fārābī writes, the consequence is voluntary evil.<sup>54</sup> Combatting this evil is a main function of the supreme ruler. Al-Fārābī states that, in order to destroy evil, the supreme ruler has to manage his city and order its parts in a way that will facilitate cooperation among its citizens with the aim of eliminating the evils and acquiring the good.<sup>55</sup> To see how al-Fārābī thinks the ruler can achieve this brings us to the third of his functions. This function involves his dual role as prophet and philosopher.

In his attempt to destroy voluntary evil and to bring the good into existence, the supreme ruler employs two methods: instruction and the formation of character.<sup>56</sup> By instruction, al-Fārābī means the introduction of theoretical virtues in the city.<sup>57</sup> For without education, no citizen can attain perfection and happiness. He writes:

"Each one of the citizens of the virtuous city is required to know the highest principles of the beings and their ranks of order, happiness, the supreme rulership of the virtuous city, and the ruling ranks of order in it; then, after that, the specified actions that, when performed, lead to the attainment of happiness."<sup>58</sup>

But because people differ in their intellectual capabilities, al-Fārābī argues, the supreme ruler should not use the same method of education with all. With the few, the philosophical elite who can intellectually cognize the essence of divine

and natural beings, he can employ the demonstrative method which yields certainty and through which the beings (al-mawjūdāt)<sup>59</sup> themselves are rendered intelligible. With the majority, the non-philosophical masses who cannot cognize these things themselves, but who can only imagine them and cognize images that imitate them, the supreme ruler must use the method of imagination and persuasion. He should make the masses comprehend the similitudes of the beings and should use persuasive arguments in order to establish these similitudes in their souls.<sup>60</sup>

This brings us to the second method employed by the first ruler to bring about the good, that is, the formation of the character of the citizens. According to al-Fārābī, the formation of character is the means by which moral virtues are introduced in the city. This involves habituating the citizens to do virtuous acts that become dispositions representing "the practical states of character." This, in turn, calls for arousing in the citizens the resolution to do these desired acts. In order to habituate the citizens in what is right, the supreme ruler must employ persuasive arguments that help "establish these acts and states of character in the soul completely so as to arouse the resolution to do the acts willingly."<sup>61</sup>

What al-Fārābī is saying is that, in order for the supreme ruler to instruct the elite and form their character, he ought to be a philosopher skilled in the speculative sciences; and in order for him to instruct the masses and form their character, he ought to be a prophet who possesses persuasion and imagination to perfection.<sup>62</sup> In his account of Plato's philosophy, which tells us as much about al-Fārābī as it does about Plato, al-Fārābī made Plato identify the theoretical

method with that of Socrates and the persuasive method with that of Thrasymachus. The thrust of his account is to indicate that the philosopher/prince ought to be able to use both methods, Socrates' method with the elite and Thrasymachus' method with the multitude.<sup>63</sup> This is why al-Fārābī considers the coincidence of excellent rational and imaginative faculties as the first quality of the founder of the virtuous city.<sup>64</sup>

If we consider first the necessity for the supreme ruler to be a prophet, we find that this rises from the fact that as a ruler his wisdom is incomplete as long as he confines it to the speculative, theoretical sciences. The supreme ruler's task of governing a city and educating its citizens, the majority of whom are only capable of conceiving an imaginative representation of the true nature of things, calls for: a) a powerful imaginative faculty that translates the inundations of the intelligibles received by the rational soul into symbols that imitate them. The language conveying these symbols is capable of being understood by the non-philosophical multitude; b) the establishment of the persuasive arguments that can cause these similitudes and imitations to be accepted; and c) the determination of the methods that can arouse the resolution of the multitude to do the desired moral acts that can bring about the good.<sup>65</sup> Al-Fārābī believes that "when the theoretical sciences are isolated and their possessor does not have the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others, they are defective philosophy."<sup>66</sup> Thus, while Plato makes statecraft a burden that turns away the philosopher from contemplating the ideal and, thus, diminishes his personal happiness,<sup>67</sup> al-Fārābī puts great emphasis on the practical abilities of the

philosopher. Thus, in the Attainment of Happiness, al-Fārābī terms the philosopher who possesses theoretical sciences but lacks the faculty by which he can convey this knowledge to the people according to their capacity, the false philosopher.<sup>68</sup>

For him, the only true and perfect philosopher is the individual who possesses:

“both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity. Were one to consider the case of the true philosopher, he would find no difference between him and the supreme ruler. For he who possesses the faculty for exploiting what is comprised by the theoretical matters for the benefit of all others possesses the faculty for making such matters intelligible as well as for bringing into actual existence those of them that depend on the will. The greater his power to do the latter, the more perfect is his philosophy. Therefore he who is truly perfect possesses with sure insight, first, theoretical virtues, and subsequently the practical. Moreover, he possesses the capacity for bringing them about in nations and cities in the manner and the measure possible with reference to each.”<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the greater the power of the philosopher to make happiness intelligible to others, each according to his intellectual capability, and the greater his capacity to bring it about in the city, the more perfect is his philosophy.<sup>70</sup>

But the method which the true philosopher uses with the multitude in order to fulfill his task produces an exoteric version of philosophy, which is “religion.” Al-Fārābī holds that “religion is an imitation of philosophy.”<sup>71</sup> But the term “imitation” is not used by al-Fārābī in a derogatory sense. It is true that al-Fārābī seems to be elevating philosophy over religion. This can especially be seen in his indication that philosophy is “the superior science and the one

with the most perfect [claim to rule or to] authority."<sup>72</sup> He also states that "the two parts of which religion is composed [i.e. the speculative and the practical] are both under philosophy [i.e. subject to philosophy]."<sup>73</sup> However, a more careful reading of his works in general yields a more moderate stand concerning the role and status of religion. In the Attainment of Happiness he writes in explaining the nature of philosophy and religion:

"Both comprise the same subjects and both give an account of the ultimate principles of the beings. For both supply knowledge about the first principle and cause of the beings, and both give an account of the ultimate end for the sake of which man is made -- that is, supreme happiness -- and the ultimate end of every one of the other beings."<sup>74</sup>

But if philosophy and religion comprise the same knowledge, where do they then differ? Elaborating on this, al-Fārābī continues:

"In everything of which philosophy gives an account based on intellectual perception or conception, religion gives an account based on imagination. In everything demonstrated by philosophy, religion employs persuasion."<sup>75</sup>

Put in another way, al-Fārābī holds that religion gives the same truth as philosophical truth but in the language of images and symbols which the non-philosopher can understand.

The symbols used in the religion should be chosen from among those which are best known in the community to which the religion is addressed. But these symbols differ from one nation to the other and, hence, they are not universally recognized. The result is that, while philosophy is universally valid because it

expresses truth in abstract language, religion, although conveying the same truth, can vary. Thus, al-Fārābī writes: "there may be a number of virtuous nations and virtuous cities whose religions are different, even though they all pursue the very same kind of happiness. For religion is but the impressions of these things or the impressions of their images, imprinted in the soul."<sup>76</sup> This, as we explained earlier, involves the special epistemic function of the supreme ruler's faculty of imagination, by virtue of which he is a prophet. In other words, when the supreme ruler/philosopher uses his imaginative faculty to translate the rational knowledge he possesses into a language which the non-philosopher can understand, the result is religion. By virtue of this faculty, the philosopher can rule. No one can be a ruler if he lacks the power of imagination of which the prophet is the most accomplished representative. The philosopher who lacks it is a false philosopher because the absence of this faculty forms a serious defect that leaves him incapable of governing the city and educating the masses. Thus, the most important conclusion to be had from al-Fārābī's discussion of the true and false philosophers is that, in al-Fārābī's scheme, the merits of philosophy are not always stressed at the expense of religion. This is not to say that al-Fārābī did not believe that religion is subordinate to philosophy. But again "subordination" here is not meant to convey a derogatory status. It ensues from the logical relation between philosophy and religion. Because religion is determined on the basis of theoretical knowledge, it follows that philosophy must precede religion and that religion must depend on it. In the Attainment of Happiness and the Book of Letters, al-Fārābī thus mentions that philosophy precedes religion in time.<sup>77</sup>



This takes us to the other quality of the supreme ruler and why he must be a philosopher and not only a prophet. The key to answering this question lies in al-Fārābī's cardinal theme, namely, that perceiving happiness and attaining theoretical perfection is a function that only the rational faculty can perform.<sup>78</sup> It follows that, in order for the supreme ruler to fulfill his task as a law-giver who, by virtue of the excellence of his deliberative faculty, can find out the conditions required for the existence of supreme happiness, he has first to intellectually perceive supreme happiness and the conditions that can bring it about.<sup>79</sup> It can also be inferred from al-Fārābī's doctrine to the effect that the imaginative faculty cannot by itself acquire universal theoretical knowledge but can only produce images that symbolize it, that this faculty must always be under the control of the rational. This is because the images produced by the powerful imaginative faculty of the supreme ruler differ in their degree of perfection and might even lack any relation with the truth. Thus, his rational faculty should constantly verify the truthfulness and authenticity of the imitations.<sup>80</sup> Al-Fārābī writes:

"The imitations of those things differ in excellence: some of them are better and more perfect imaginative representations, while others are less perfect; some are closer to, others are more removed from, the truth. In some the points of contention are few or unnoticeable, or it is difficult to contend against them, while in others the points of contention are many or easy to detect. ... Now if they are of equal excellence as regards imitation, or with respect to having only a few or unnoticeable points of contention, then one can use all or any one of them indifferently. But if they are not of equal excellence, one should choose the ones that are the most perfect

imitations and that either are completely free of points of contention or in which the points of contention are few or unnoticeable; next, those that are closer to the truth; and discard all other imitations."<sup>81</sup>

But in order to be able to choose the imitations closer to the theoretical things demonstrated in the theoretical sciences, the supreme ruler must, as we have mentioned, first acquire theoretical knowledge. A corollary to this is that the philosopher alone can interpret the symbolism of religion and translate it into demonstrative terms. This is because "he is the one who invents the images and the persuasive arguments, but not for the sake of establishing these things in his own soul as a religion for himself." For, as al-Fārābī continues, "the images and the persuasive arguments are intended for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, these things are certain. They are a religion for others, whereas, so far as he is concerned, they are philosophy."<sup>82</sup>

Thus far, it can be concluded that, for al-Fārābī, not every philosopher is a prophet while every prophet must be a philosopher. According to al-Fārābī, the supreme ruler, the founder of the virtuous regime, must be a philosopher and a prophet because this is the true and perfect philosopher. Hence, the philosophic and prophetic faculties constitute, for al-Fārābī, the first and necessary requirement that the supreme ruler must fulfill. In the Virtuous City, however, al-Fārābī enumerates twelve other qualities the supreme ruler must have. These, in brief, are as follows<sup>83</sup>:

1 - Perfect and sound bodily organs that can perform their functions with ease.

- 2 - Sound understanding that enables him to grasp the intention of the speaker.
- 3 - Good memory that retains what he understands, sees, hears and perceives.
- 4 - Intelligence and keenness of mind which allows him to grasp the reality of a certain situation with the minimum of indicative signs (adillah).
- 5 - Eloquence which assists him in articulating his thoughts.
- 6 - Love of education so that he is not burdened by the effort accompanying learning.
- 7 - Moderation in matters of food, drink and sex, as well as natural shunning of levity and of pleasures caused by these things.
- 8 - Love of truth and truthful people and dislike of lying and liars.
- 9 - Natural magnanimity and repugnance of meanness.
- 10 - Indifference to money and all other worldly pleasures.
- 11 - Natural love of justice and just people and abhorrence of injustice and unjust people; to treat other people like he treats his family, that is, without any discrimination and to see that justice is done to the oppressed whoever he is; being easy to bend to justice but difficult to bend to oppression or evil.
- 12 - Possession of firm resolution and the courage to do what he believes must be done.

According to al-Fārābī, these qualities must inhere in the nature of the first ruler, that is, they are natural dispositions or aptitudes.

In addition to these twelve innate attributes, al-Fārābī enumerates in the Aphorisms six other "conditions" that must be possessed by the first ruler. These conditions, unlike the attributes, do not supervene until after maturity.<sup>84</sup> They are: wisdom, perfect practical wisdom, excellence of the faculty of persuasion, excellence of producing a representative imagination of the truth, power to fight the holy war in person and the absence of any physical impediments which would prevent him from attending to the matters which belong to holy war.<sup>85</sup> If all the twelve innate qualities, as well as at least five of the six conditions (provided that the excellence of the imaginative faculty is not absent), do exist in a certain man, this individual then would be the first ruler, the founder of the virtuous city.<sup>86</sup> But what if no one man exists who possesses all the qualities and conditions required for ruling?

In the Virtuous City, and despite the fact that al-Fārābī confesses here that the incidence of the existence of one man who is naturally equipped with all the twelve qualities and who comes to possess at least five of the six conditions is very rare, his language suggests that the founding of the virtuous regime cannot take place unless this individual emerges. In other words, the first leadership of the virtuous regime, according to the Virtuous City, cannot be represented by a group possessing an aggregate of these qualities and conditions.<sup>87</sup> It is true that in the Political Regime one finds a passage in which al-Fārābī seems to be saying that a collective first leadership is possible. Speaking first about the first ruler, he goes on to say:

"If at any one time a group of these kings happens to reside in a single city, in a single nation, or in many nations, then this group is as it were a single king because they agree in their endeavors, purposes, opinions, and ways of life."<sup>88</sup>

A careful reading of the context in which this passage comes reveals, however, that this collective first leadership arises, not from the absence of the one man who possesses all the prerequisite qualities and conditions for ruling, but from the existence of a number of men, each of whom individually acquires all these qualities and conditions. Support for this interpretation can be found in a similar, yet clearer, passage in the Virtuous City. It reads:

"The kings of the virtuous cities who come in different times, one after the other, are all like one soul, as if they are one king who lives (eternally) throughout the whole time. Also, if at any one time a group of them happens to be either in one city or in many cities, then this group is like one king ...."<sup>89</sup>

It has to be mentioned, however, that in the Aphorisms al-Fārābī allows that, in the case where no one man possesses the six conditions of ruling that supervene after maturity, a group of people can rule collectively if the six conditions exist separately among the members of this group. But one has to take into consideration that al-Fārābī is speaking here solely about the six acquired conditions of ruling. No reference to the twelve innate qualities is made here.<sup>90</sup> In the light of his other writings, one can conclude that the founder and first ruler of the virtuous regime must be an individual. Collective leadership is only approved, as we shall see, with regard to the successors of the first ruler.

**B. The Virtuous Regime:**

The people who are ruled by this virtuous leader are virtuous, good and happy and the regime that is governed by him is the virtuous regime.<sup>91</sup> When we say, however, that the virtuous leader is the cause of the virtuous regime, this should not be understood in the sense that he is the one who initially brings people together in order to form a kind of political association. Al-Fārābī holds that "men belong to the species that cannot accomplish their necessary affairs or achieve their best state, except through the association of many groups of them in a single dwelling-place."<sup>92</sup> This is because in order to acquire the necessities of his life and to attain his utmost perfection man needs many things which, by nature, he cannot fulfill all by himself.<sup>93</sup> Thus, he needs to associate with his kind and combine with others in communities in which each one of them would provide the others with some of the things needed for sustenance. The totality of what the members of the community do collectively provides each member with all that he needs for his sustenance and for his perfection as well.<sup>94</sup> Hence, al-Fārābī tells us, man is a social and political animal by nature.<sup>95</sup> But although man is bound with others by instinct, the nature of the association which results is determined by the kind of leadership by which it is governed.

When the leadership makes its aim the achievement of true happiness for the community, it is termed "virtuous." This is because, in governing the community, it makes use of an art of ruling which consists of the knowledge of those actions and dispositions of will which can bring about the attainment of happiness. Moreover, it gives effect to these actions and dispositions. It follows that the

regime in which these policies find expression is the virtuous regime and that the men who live in such a regime are the virtuous men. By contrast, the leadership that directs the community towards a false happiness is a non-virtuous leadership and the people and the regime governed by it are also non-virtuous.<sup>96</sup>

In discussing the nature of the virtuous regime, al-Fārābī resorts, as he states, to Socrates', Plato's and Aristotle's opinions concerning this life and the life after. He argues that because, according to these ancient philosophers, man has a life in this world and a life in the next, it follows that he also has two perfections to achieve: a first perfection which is to be attained in this life and a final perfection which belongs to the hereafter. This final perfection is the only true and supreme happiness. It is the good desired for itself not as a means for achieving something else. But this final perfection cannot be attained unless the worldly perfection is first acquired. This worldly perfection is attained through the knowledge of the virtues, the acquirement of the voluntary dispositions<sup>97</sup> which allows one to do the moral actions, and the actual performance of these moral actions. This is because, al-Fārābī goes on, perfection consists in doing and not merely in knowing or acquiring the will to do. Hence, al-Fārābī defines the virtuous regime as the regime in which men come together and cooperate with the aim of attaining the final perfection; that is, the supreme happiness in the hereafter.<sup>98</sup>

According to al-Fārābī, the smallest community in which perfection can be attained is the city. Al-Fārābī divides the human associations into the perfect and the imperfect. The perfect, in their turn, are divided, according to their

size, into the large, the medium and the small. The large association consists of many nations that associate and cooperate with one another to form the inhabited world. The medium association is that of a nation which is a part of the inhabited world. The small association is represented by a city which forms a portion of a nation. Hence, the city in al-Fārābī's scheme is the first degree of perfection, that is, it is the smallest political unit in which worldly perfection can be attained.<sup>99</sup> Smaller associations, like those in villages, quarters, streets and households are the imperfect associations. But, although perfection cannot be accomplished in these imperfect gatherings, they still contribute to this end through their serving of the city. They form parts of the city which, in its turn, is part of the nation and this is part of the inhabited world.<sup>100</sup> The absolutely perfect association, al-Fārābī maintains, is the association of all men in the entire inhabited world.<sup>101</sup> Although al-Fārābī did not elaborate, many scholars read his statement as revealing the universalist tendency of his political thought. They argue that, by widening the ideal political community from the city-state of Plato to the world-state, al-Fārābī is reflecting the impact of Islamic teachings on his thought.<sup>102</sup>

#### **"Jihād" and the Universal State:**

A brief discussion of this point is not beyond the scope of this thesis. This is because the advocacy of the idea of a universal state means, in one of its applications, the preaching of the subordination of some nations (in al-Fārābī's case, the less virtuous) to the rule of others (in this case, the more perfect). To be sure, al-Fārābī's teachings regarding this issue pose a problem.



In the Virtuous City, as we have seen, he makes physical fitness, an attribute which is not mentioned by Plato in the Republic, the first quality of the founder of the virtuous regime.<sup>103</sup> In enumerating the indispensable conditions that must be present in the successor of the first ruler, he explicitly includes the ability to personally participate in war among these conditions.<sup>104</sup> It is quite interesting that in the Aphorisms he substitutes the term "holy war" for the term "war."<sup>105</sup> Does this imply that al-Fārābī was adopting an Islamic concept of holy war as a means of introducing the Islamic divine law to all parts of the world?

In the Attainment of Happiness, when speaking about the virtuous ruler's task of educating and instructing the citizens, he pointed out two methods of forming the character of the people. The first is the method of persuasion. The second is the method of compulsion. Although al-Fārābī's discussion of this latter method started with reference to those citizens of the regime who cannot be convinced to perform the virtuous activities by passionate and persuasive arguments, he went on to say that compulsion is legitimate with respect to citizens of other cities as well. This skill for forming the character by compulsion, al-Fārābī maintains, calls for superiority in the craft of war. This craft enables the first ruler "to excell in organizing and leading armies and utilizing war implements and war-like people to conquer the nations and cities that do not submit to doing what will procure them that happiness for whose acquisition man is made."<sup>106</sup> However, when discussing the different types of non-virtuous cities, al-Fārābī counted among them the tyrannical city. This is the city in which men associate with the main purpose of enslaving other people. War is

an end in itself for this non-virtuous regime.<sup>107</sup> Could this mean that al-Fārābī is rejecting war as an end in itself while approving of it when its aim is to establish a virtuous regime?

To answer this question, due attention ought to be paid to the wording of the statement in the Political Regime which affirms that the association of men in the entire inhabited world is the absolutely perfect association. It reads:

"And the absolutely perfect human society is divided into nations. A nation is distinguished from the other nation by two natural things -- natural make-up and natural character -- and by a third thing which is conventional and (also) has a basis in natural things which is the tongue, I mean the language."<sup>108</sup>

What this passage clearly conveys is that al-Fārābī's statement considering the entire inhabited world to be the absolutely perfect political association has been qualified with the observation that a) this universal association is not "one" body but rather a "unified" body which consists of a number of distinct nations, and b) these nations differ from each other by nature and each has its distinct natural character and its own language. Put in another way, al-Fārābī is recognizing the differences between nations of the inhabited world as inevitable. As such, he could not be advocating either the subordination of nations to each other according to their degree of perfection or the subordination of all nations to the one virtuous nation, if it happens to exist. This is clarified by another statement in his other political work, the Virtuous City, where he writes "... the virtuous association of all men in the entire world exists only when the nations in it cooperate to achieve happiness."<sup>109</sup> There is nothing in this statement which

conveys that the concept of the virtuous inhabited world is investigated by al-Fārābī with a view to being brought into existence by means of subordinating the different nations to the one virtuous regime. Rather it is viewed as being the summation of a number of virtuous nations who cooperate together despite their specific character. The same could be said about the virtuous nation. According to al-Fārābī, the virtuous nation is not a group of cities subordinated to the rule of one virtuous city, but is rather the aggregation of a number of virtuous cities that all cooperate regarding the things by which happiness is attained.<sup>110</sup>

It is also significant in this regard that nowhere in al-Fārābī's discussion of the non-virtuous cities does he advocate the subordination of these cities to the virtuous one. He rather speaks about the attempt at transforming them into virtuous cities.<sup>111</sup> But does this transformation justify, in al-Fārābī's scheme, an aggressive war? Does he consider the war to be just as long as its aim is to transform non-virtuous regimes into virtuous nations, a target which, if realized, will lead to the existence of the entire virtuous world? Before attempting a conclusive answer to such questions, one final Farabian theme, crucial to this discussion, must be taken into consideration. This is al-Fārābī's emphasis on the possibility of the existence of different cities and nations that are all virtuous despite their adoption of different religions. This difference in religions is permissible because they all follow a virtuous way of life aiming at the same goal, namely, the attainment of the ultimate perfection in this life and in the life-to-come.<sup>112</sup> In other words, different religions can exist in different cities

and nations because they are imitations of the one philosophical truth, whereas this philosophical truth itself is universal despite the natural, linguistic and religious distinctions.

Putting all these scattered ideas together, one can attempt to draw an integral conclusion. What al-Fārābī seems to be saying is that, as long as there are non-virtuous regimes in the inhabited world, war launched by the virtuous regimes against the non-virtuous ones is a necessity. The purpose of this "just" war is not merely to bring the vicious regime under the rule of the virtuous one, but mainly to transform this non-virtuous regime into a virtuous one by establishing a virtuous religion. The virtuous religion which is to be established in each city or nation must respect the distinct natural and conventional character, as well as, the language of the people of these different cities and nations. When all the nations are transformed into virtuous regimes, wars will stop. There will be no need for offensive wars then. It follows that defensive wars could not occur either. The universal state will then come into being. This state is universal only with regard to the philosophical truth. What is actually universal in al-Fārābī's scheme is the theoretical knowledge whose transmission among the philosophical elite of the different cities and nations is never hindered by distinct natural and conventional characters. It follows that the universal community of wise virtuous men, the lovers and followers of the one truth always exists. It does not wait until the virtuous world-state comes into being. Wars are then only a method to bring to the masses of different nations the virtuous religion which befits their character and which can, thus, help them attain the

kind of happiness for which they are intellectually qualified.

It is not difficult to infer from the previous discussion that, for al-Fārābī, the realization of a virtuous world presupposes the realization of virtuous nations and that the realization of virtuous nations presupposes the realization of virtuous cities. Thus, the basic political and social unit for him is the virtuous city. Consequently, his political discussions, for the most part, focus on the virtuous city and the conditions that must be satisfied to bring it about. In discussing the structure of the virtuous city he uses two models. The first is that of the human body,<sup>113</sup> the second, of the universe as a whole with God as its ruler,<sup>114</sup>

To begin with the first model, the city is analogous to the human body. As such, it must consist of a ruler and a series of subordinates, paralleling, respectively, the heart and the subordinate organs of the body. According to al-Fārābī, the organs of the body are of a hierarchical nature, with the heart acting as the pivot of the whole body. The importance of the other organs thus decreases as they recede from the heart, each serving a higher organ and being served by a lower one until they end with the organs (bladder and lower small intestines) which are served by no other organ.<sup>115</sup> Al-Fārābī maintains that the city must be organized in the same hierarchical manner. Just as the body has one chief organ which is the most perfect, that is, the heart, the city must have a supreme ruler who represents the most perfect part of it. The ranks of the other rungs of the city should vary according to their proximity to the chief of the city. Moreover, just as the perfectly healthy body is that body whose organs cooperate to achieve and preserve the most perfect and healthy

life for it, the virtuous city is that city whose different parts cooperate to pursue, achieve and maintain happiness. But whereas the faculties which allow the different organs of the body to function are natural, the people of the city are destined to their different roles and positions not only by virtue of their distinct natural dispositions, but also by the states of characters and the virtues which they acquire voluntarily.<sup>116</sup> Since the natural and acquired characters differ, people differ with regard to the actions (and their corresponding virtues) in which they excel. The natural outcome is that the city must consist of various classes. As we have mentioned, the supreme ruler is the only one in the city who is able to organize the citizens and place each in the position he merits. The sole criterion which the supreme ruler follows in this organizational task is the citizen's character, virtues and obedience to the law.<sup>117</sup>

It is in discussing the performance of this task that al-Fārābī introduces the second model, that of the universe ruled by God. The supreme ruler must look on himself in relation to the city as similar to the First Cause in relation to the universe.<sup>118</sup> Thus, just as God endowed the different parts of the universe and the different existing beings with natural forms and instincts so that, despite their multiplicity and the multiplicity of their actions, they all pursue one aim, the supreme ruler must do the same in the city. He must foster in the citizens of the city the will to act in a relationship of cooperation, in spite of their multiplicity, so that through their cooperative activity they all become as one entity performing one action in the pursuit of one aim. Hence, the importance of philosophy for the supreme ruler: without it he cannot attain true knowledge

of how God organizes the universe and runs it, and as such will not be able to emulate the structure of the universe in organizing the city. Al-Fārābī also stresses the importance of religion as a cohesive factor in the city. The existence of a common religion unites all the citizens, gives harmony and coherence to the structure of their views, thereby facilitating the aim which the supreme ruler seeks for them, that is, the attainment of ultimate happiness.<sup>119</sup> It is only when the supreme ruler succeeds in arranging the citizens according to their natural and acquired abilities, that the city will be properly organized. All its parts will then be serving the purpose of the leader. The result is the realization of the ideal city.

C. The Citizens of the Virtuous Regime and the Destiny of Their Souls:

Like the city itself, its citizens are also virtuous. This is because they live under conditions in which a) knowledge of true happiness is attained, and b) the requisite virtues and the noble activities conducive to happiness are developed and performed.<sup>120</sup>

Regarding the citizens' knowledge of true happiness, al-Fārābī maintains that, despite the different intellectual capabilities of the citizens of the virtuous regime, all of them must know, each according to his own capacity, the First Cause, the highest principles of beings and their ranks, the Active Intellect, the celestial bodies, the terrestrial bodies, man and his biological and psychological structure, revelation, the first ruler of the virtuous city and his successors, the virtuous city and its structure, happiness, the destiny of its inhabitants and

the nature and destiny of the citizens of the cities that are opposed to it.<sup>121</sup> The nature of this knowledge will differ because some can comprehend and cognize these things as they really are whereas the majority can only imagine them. Nevertheless, both kinds are considered by al-Fārābī as "knowledge" which acts as a necessary pre-requisite for the attainment of happiness. As a result of this difference in the nature of knowledge of the citizens of the virtuous city, they can be classified into three classes: 1) The philosophers or wise men who know the true essences of these things by means of demonstrative proof and by their own insight. 2) Those whose intellectual abilities are a little below the philosophers. Al-Fārābī calls them the followers of the philosophers. They know the true nature of these things through the demonstrations presented to them by the philosophers, mainly because they trust the insight of these philosophers and, thus, they accept their judgement. 3) The rest of the citizens who know these things through the similitudes that imitate them because they are unable, either by nature or by habit, to comprehend and cognize the true nature of these things.<sup>122</sup> This last group of citizens is termed "the believers" in the Political Regime.<sup>123</sup>

Turning to the virtues and activities that are developed and performed in the virtuous regime, al-Fārābī writes that the citizens of this regime are not only asked to acquire knowledge of certain things, but are also required to develop certain moral virtues and to perform certain actions that lead to happiness. Some people know by themselves, that is without guidance, what ought to be done to attain happiness; others, however, are either guided, induced or coerced by the ruler to do these actions.<sup>124</sup> By doing the actions that are



determined and directed towards happiness, the individual acquires good states of the soul. The more he continues doing these actions, the stronger this part of the soul that is naturally equipped for happiness becomes. Continued practice in these actions actualizes and perfects this part of the soul "to the extent that the power resulting from the perfection achieved by it enables it to dispense with matter."<sup>125</sup> Becoming immaterial, the soul is no longer in need of matter in order to exist either in this life or in the life after. This immaterial state is happiness and ultimate perfection, both in its worldly and final forms.

Worldly perfection ensues from the individual's acquisition of the knowledge and the actions that help the rational faculty perform its specific activity properly. It is obvious that men differ, not only in their intellectual capabilities, but also in their ability to discipline their lower desires. The result is that, even within the virtuous city, people differ with regard to the degree of perfection they acquire through their political participation in this virtuous regime. Consequently, the happiness attained by the citizens of this city differs in quantity and quality.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the happiness achieved by each individual is considered the supreme happiness with regard to this specific individual. This is because "every being is made to achieve the ultimate perfection it is susceptible of achieving according to its specific place in the order of being. Man's specific perfection is called supreme happiness; and to each man, according to his rank in the order of humanity, belongs the specific supreme happiness pertaining to his kind of man."<sup>127</sup>

Differences in the degree of worldly happiness or perfection leads, inevitably, to differences in the degree of ultimate perfection, that is, supreme happiness in the life to come. If true happiness and perfection in this life consists in doing the actions that lead to happiness and partaking of the immaterial nature of the Active Intellect, then the greater the individual's share of this worldly moral and intellectual perfection, the more his soul partakes of the state of immateriality. Immateriality leads to immortality which is ultimate bliss and supreme happiness in the hereafter. It follows that the happiness which the virtuous souls enjoy in the afterlife is not uniform. This is because its prerequisite, that is the happiness attained in this life, differs in quantity and quality from one individual to the other. In other words, the life to come is as hierarchial as this world. This is because immortality is assigned by al-Fārābī only to the intellectual part of the soul. At the same time, he makes the soul's degree of intellectual apprehension differ considerably due to differences in natural, as well as acquired, dispositions. Because virtuous souls are able to dispense with matter in this life, they become uncorrupted by the destruction of matter (the body). They survive death to live in eternal bliss of intellectual contemplation and:

"When one group passes away and their bodies are corrupted and their souls have attained salvation and happiness and they are then succeeded by others who take their place in the city and perform their acts, the souls of these others are also saved. And when their bodies are corrupted, they arrive at the ranks of those of that group that have passed away and become in their vicinity in the way (those things) that are not bodily come close to each other,

and the kindred souls within each group will be in a state of union with one another."<sup>128</sup>

What al-Fārābī is saying is that, after death, each virtuous soul joins with its kind to form a hierarchy in which the happiness of the virtuous souls within each group is intensified as new good individual souls join the group and as they all unite with one another in their specific rank of hierarchy. However, as in the case of the virtuous city, this collective relationship and mutual dependence to attain happiness does not mean that these souls lose their individuality. Happiness, according to al-Fārābī, is felt by each virtuous soul individually. He writes:

"The more the kindred separate souls increase in number and unite with one another, the greater the pleasure felt by each soul; .... For each soul will then be intellecting, in addition to itself, many other souls that are of the same kind."<sup>129</sup>

This makes us understand how al-Fārābī maintains that virtuous people who live in a non-virtuous regime can still attain eternal bliss after death. Because the prerequisite of eternal happiness is to achieve the state of immateriality in this life through intellectual and moral perfection, the virtuous man who succeeds in accomplishing this is saved. It is true, however, that living within a virtuous regime facilitates the accomplishment of this aim. This is because it provides the suitable milieu for moral and intellectual perfection to flourish and because the system guides those who cannot achieve this on their own. This is why al-Fārābī makes it incumbent upon virtuous people to immigrate to the virtuous regime and not to live in a non-virtuous state when a virtuous one

exists in their time. If no virtuous state exists, he confesses that the virtuous man would live like a stranger in this non-virtuous regime and that death for him might be better than life.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, his soul, after it separates from the body, lives in eternal bliss. This is because living in a non-virtuous state and being coerced to follow its path does not endow his soul with vicious dispositions which oppose his virtuous character, as long as he does not enjoy the non-virtuous path he is forced to follow.<sup>131</sup> In other words, in a non-virtuous regime the virtuous man might not be able to undertake the proper role or function to which he is destined by virtue of his moral and intellectual capabilities. Al-Fārābī states that a virtuous man will never hold the leadership of an ignorant state. If this should happen, he will either be overthrown or killed by its citizens.<sup>132</sup> However, his sheer survival in such a city is possible and his salvation in the life to come is definite.

By the same token, non-virtuous people who live in a virtuous city cannot gain salvation simply because they live in such a regime. Such people are termed the weeds by al-Fārābī. Although they live in the virtuous city, they are not genuinely integrated into it. It is the duty of the virtuous ruler either to try and make them subscribe to the precepts of the virtuous regime or, if this proves impossible, he must imprison or expel them from the city before they contaminate others.<sup>133</sup>

As we have seen the emergence of a virtuous regime requires a ruler who is both a prophet and a philosopher, possessing thereby theoretical and practical wisdom. The question that now rises is: Can the virtuous regime survive in the

absence of this man?

D. The Problem of Succession in the Virtuous Regime:

According to al-Fārābī, as long as the rulers who succeed each other in governing the virtuous regime are like the first ruler in every way the virtuous regime survives. This is because each of them possesses all the abilities and qualities of the first ruler and, hence, can achieve what the first ruler did not have the time to do. It follows that any of these successors can change any of what the first ruler had legislated "not because the first [ruler] was in error, but because the first [ruler] decided upon it according to what was best in his own time, and the successor decides according to what is best for the time after the first [ruler]. Were his predecessor to observe [the new conditions] he would have changed [his own law] also."<sup>134</sup>

Al-Fārābī holds that the coincidence of all the necessary qualities and conditions in one person, the first ruler of the virtuous regime, is extremely rare. It can be derived from this that it will be even more rare that the numerous successors should possess these qualities. Chance will not always favour the regime with the availability of such a leader. Al-Fārābī, thus, allows that once a philosopher/prophet, in whose person all the qualities and conditions for ruling exist, establishes a virtuous regime, he may well be succeeded by a person who meets different and less strict conditions.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, if no single person should exist who is equipped with the necessary conditions required in the successors of the first ruler, collective leadership is permitted.<sup>136</sup> When addressing this

problem of succession in the Virtuous City al-Fārābī insists that philosophy must always be represented in the leadership of the virtuous regime. The first condition he puts for the successor of the first ruler is to be a philosopher.<sup>137</sup> As for prophecy, although he accepts the lack of the prophetic power in the successor, he maintains that certain conditions are required that, in fact, act as a proper substitute for this deficiency. First of all, he insists that the body of laws and customs established by the first ruler and those successors, who happen to be similar to him, must be preserved in writing. As for the successor himself, he must fulfill a combination of new conditions:<sup>138</sup>

- a) He should know and retain the laws which the ancients have prescribed for the city, following completely these laws in all his actions.
- b) He should possess an excellent ability to extract from given situations laws not handed down from predecessors, following in what he elicits their example.
- c) He should possess an excellent deliberative power and a power to extract laws relating to present events which the ancients should not have possibly legislated. In this, he should have as his aim the welfare of the city.
- d) He should have the ability to guide people according to the laws of the early rulers and those inferred after them by those who followed their example.

If these conditions are not united in one man, al-Fārābī goes on, two men can rule jointly. One of them must be a philosopher, the other possessing all the other conditions. Should this prove to be unobtainable, the virtuous regime could be governed by a team of persons each of whom would possess one of the required

conditions. In either case, philosophy must be represented in the leadership. If philosophy is absent altogether, al-Fārābī insists, the mere existence of the virtuous regime is at stake and the state will eventually disintegrate.<sup>139</sup>

But in his other political works, namely the Political Regime, the Aphorisms and the Book of Religion, he seems to be saying something else. Here his emphasis shifts from philosophy to the conditions that substitute for the prophetic power of legislation. In the Political Regime he maintains that, if no one person exists who is similar to the first ruler in everything, the laws established by the first ruler should be preserved. The ruler who comes to the leadership of the regime should govern it using these written preserved laws. He is "the king according to the law" (malik al-sunnah).<sup>140</sup> No reference to philosophy as a necessary condition for ruling is made here. The same could be said about the Aphorisms. Here al-Fārābī enumerates six conditions that are required in the "king by the law." It is obvious that they are designed in a way that will make this ruler proficient in the art of jurisprudence. Again, if no one person should be found who possesses all the required conditions, a group of men who possess these conditions collectively should rule. These are termed "the kings by law" (mulūk al-sunnah). Philosophy is not counted here among the six conditions for ruling.<sup>141</sup> In the Book of Religion, al-Fārābī is more explicit. Here he states that whereas the first ruler who establishes the virtuous regime must be a theoretical and practical philosopher, his successor, whose leadership is mainly a legal one, does not need philosophy to rule.<sup>142</sup> This is because this leader will follow the laws of his predecessor rather than change them or legislate new ones. He will employ

analogical reasoning to apply the established laws to new circumstances. Hence, he needs to be neither a philosopher nor a prophet. What he needs is the art of jurisprudence.<sup>143</sup>

E. Non-Virtuous Regimes, Their Citizens and the Destiny of Their Souls:

The possibility that an originally virtuous regime can deteriorate into a non-virtuous one is, hence, implicit in al-Fārābī's discussion. He, nevertheless, maintains that, in some cases, non-virtuous regimes may have initially been founded on false foundations. This happens when the divine law by which they are governed is based on false opinions.<sup>144</sup> Al-Fārābī divides the non-virtuous regimes into four broad types.<sup>145</sup> They all substitute true happiness for other lower ends and set these up as standards of the good life.

The first type of non-virtuous regime is the ignorant city. Its leadership, as well as its citizens, never possessed knowledge of true happiness. They substitute this with false worldly pleasures such as: mere self-preservation (city of necessity), wealth (plutocracy), pleasure (city of meanness), honour (timocracy), conquest (tyranny) or freedom and lawlessness (democracy).

Another type of non-virtuous regime is the immoral city. Its inhabitants know the true nature of things but deliberately do not live up to the truth they know.

A third type of this regime is the renegade city. Its inhabitants originally knew the true nature of things. They knew true happiness and conformed to



its standards but departed from it in the course of time.

The erring city is the last example presented by al-Fārābī in this regard. Its founder, al-Fārābī holds, convinced its inhabitants that he was receiving revelation and resorted to deception in order to achieve this aim. Thus, the knowledge of God and true happiness which the citizens acquire is false, as well as the similitudes that symbolize this knowledge.

All these types of regimes are opposed to the virtuous regime because they do not follow its guiding principle, that is, true happiness. It follows that the destiny of the inhabitants of such regimes differs from the destiny of the citizens of the virtuous one.

As we have mentioned above, the virtuous souls live after death in eternal intellectual bliss because they knew the true nature of things and true happiness during this life and followed a virtuous path. The souls of the citizens of the ignorant cities, because they never actualized their potential intellect, simply disintegrate. This is because their souls never attained a non-material state that would allow their survival after the destruction of the matter (i.e. the body). They can live a second cycle of life either in the form of a human being or in the form of an animal depending on what comes out of the combination of the basic elements into which they disintegrated.<sup>146</sup> This partial admission of the transmigration of the soul on behalf of al-Fārābī means, in other words, that he does not believe in bodily resurrection.

As for the inhabitants of the immoral regimes, their souls survive death to live in eternal torment. The rationale for this is that they knew true happiness

but shunned it for lower things. Their souls, which attained immaterial status during their earthly lives, survive after the destruction. But the disintegration of the body deprives them of the means by which they used to acquire worldly pleasures. They will thus eternally long for these pleasures without being able to attain them.<sup>147</sup>

In the case of the inhabitants of the erring regime, it is only their leader who is punished eternally. This is because he alone knew true happiness and actualized his potential intellect. His subjects are practically in a state of ignorance. Thus, their fate is similar to that of the people of the ignorant cities; their souls, like all material forms, become part of the process of generation and corruption.<sup>148</sup>

The same applies to the citizens of the renegade regime. Whoever has been the cause of their deliberate perdition will suffer eternally. The inhabitants themselves will disintegrate.<sup>149</sup>

We have attempted in this chapter an exposition of al-Fārābī's theory of the state in some detail. This exposition undoubtedly indicates the comprehensiveness and coherence of his political philosophy. The main reason for this detailed exposition, however, relates to the issue of comparing his political theory with that of the Brethren. First of all, the details often contain some of the views that either appear in the Epistles of the Brethren or bear comparison to what the latter hold. Secondly, this exposition helps reveal the completely different perspective that underlies al-Fārābī's philosophy, in its totality, when comparing it with the Brethren's philosophical views.

ENDNOTES

1. Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:319.
2. See Dunlop, introduction to Aphorisms, pp. 3-4; Mahdi, Foundations, p. 14.
3. Marmura, Der Islam, p. 348. Check VC, pp. 126-31, 141-48.
4. TS, pp. 49-64; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 14-25.
5. TS, pp. 63-64; Plato and Aristotle, p. 24.
6. TS, pp. 63-64; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 24-25.
7. Siyāṣah, pp. 70-71, 72-73; Alfarabi, The Political Regime, trans. Fawzi M. Najjar, in Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds., Medieval Political Philosophy, pp. 32-33, 34 (hereafter cited as PR).
8. Siyāṣah, p. 76.
9. Thérèse-Anne Druart, "Al-Fārābī's Causation of the Heavenly Bodies," in P. Morewedge, ed., Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism, pp. 42-43 (hereafter cited as "Causation").
10. Siyāṣah, p. 84; PR, pp. 39-40.
11. VC, pp. 23, 30; Siyāṣah, pp. 42-45.
12. Davidson remarks that the scheme of the universe as consisting of a series of celestial spheres whose unceasing movements depend on incorporeal movers is borrowed by al-Fārābī from Aristotle. Al-Fārābī, however, unlike Aristotle who recognized only causality in motion but not in existence within the series of incorporeal movers, spoke of causality both in motion and existence. This, as Davidson notes, is achieved by the Neo-platonic doctrine of emanation adopted by al-Fārābī. See Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 134-35.
13. VC, pp. 30-31; Siyāṣah, p. 45.
14. VC, pp. 44-45; Siyāṣah, p. 52.

15. See Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 136, 149-50; Siyāṣah, pp. 54-55, 55-56, 62-63, 71-72; VC, pp. 57-59, 83. One should note that in Risālah fī al-ʿAql it is mentioned that both the Active Intellect and the heavenly bodies are responsible for the appearance of the terrestrial world. While the role of the heavenly bodies is to provide the prime matter, it is the Active Intellect that gives form to this matter and to specific matters. However, because Risālah fī al-ʿAql is mostly an exegesis of Aristotle's De Amina and not a Fārābīan work proper, and because in his personal works, al-Fārābī either refrains from referring to the role of the Active Intellect or speaks of its causation in relation with the terrestrial world as only by means of its influence on the human intellect, Druart tends to believe that what comes in Risālah fī al-ʿAql simply represents al-Fārābī's interpretation and understanding of Aristotle and not his own opinion on the subject. See al-ʿAql, pp. 29-31; Druart, "Causation," pp. 35-36. For an exposition of al-Fārābī's statements on this subject in his various works, see Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 149-52.
16. VC, p. 49; Siyāṣah, p. 58. Al-Fārābī is quite ambiguous as to how this origination occurs. He states, without giving a satisfactory explanation, that prime matter is a necessary product of the uniform nature or power communicated by the outer sphere to the other celestial spheres beneath it and which causes them to move. This, he continues, expresses itself in the lowest stage by producing the prime matter of the terrestrial world. See VC, pp. 58-59; Siyāṣah, pp. 55-56.
17. VC, p. 59; Siyāṣah, p. 56.
18. VC, p. 60-62; Siyāṣah, p. 62-63.
19. VC, pp. 70-73; Siyāṣah, pp. 32-33.
20. VC, pp. 82-83; Siyāṣah, pp. 54-55.
21. VC, pp. 81-84; Siyāṣah, pp. 35-36.
22. VC, pp. 83-84; Siyāṣah, pp. 71-72.

23. VC, pp. 83-84; Siyāṣah, pp. 34-35.
24. VC, pp. 85-87; Siyāṣah, pp. 32.
25. VC, pp. 112-113; Siyāṣah, pp. 32, 42, 81-82.
26. VC, pp. 113-17; Siyāṣah, pp. 81-82. An exception to this rule are those citizens of the virtuous regime whom al-Fārābī terms "the weeds" (al-nawābit). Although inhabiting the virtuous city, they are not genuinely integrated into it, but only pretend to subscribe to its motives. Al-Fārābī does not speak explicitly about the destiny of this group; but, if we press the logic of the criterion he sets for reward and punishment in the hereafter, we would have to conclude that this group will be eternally doomed. See VC, p. 109; Siyāṣah, p. 87.
27. VC, pp. 121-23; Siyāṣah, pp. 81-82; PR, p. 38; TS, p. 81; Plato and Aristotle, p. 37.
28. VC, pp. 97, 112; Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, pp. 37-38; KM, p. 52.
29. VC, p. 104; Siyāṣah, p. 79; PR, p. 36.
30. VC, p. 102-03; Siyāṣah, p. 79; PR, p. 36.
31. VC, p. 103-04; Siyāṣah, p. 79; PR, p. 36.
32. VC, p. 104; Siyāṣah, p. 79-80; PR, p. 36-37.
33. VC, p. 88, 102; Siyāṣah, p. 85-86; PR, p. 41.
34. Marmura, Der Islam, p. 350.
35. VC, pp. 88-92. Note that Davidson reads al-Fārābī as saying that the imagination predicts future events only after a normal process of deliberation by the practical reason has taken place. See Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 145-46.
36. VC, pp. 91-92.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 93-94. It should be remarked here that Davidson understands al-Fārābī as differentiating between two kinds of prophets. The first consists of those whose prophetic nature depends on the influence of the

Active Intellect upon their exceptionally strong imaginative faculty, but who, nevertheless, have not yet perfected their intellect. A higher level of prophets is represented by men who reach the stage of acquired intellect. Here, the Active Intellect affects the rational faculty first and then an emanation descends from it to the imaginative faculty. See Davidson, "Intellect," pp. 145-48.

To be sure, in al-Fārābī's discussion of prophecy, there is a distinction between the imaginative and the rational faculties as two powers by means of which man can communicate with the Active Intellect. A careful reading of al-Fārābī, however, reveals, as Mahdi holds, that this distinction is meant mainly to clarify the nature of prophetic and philosophic knowledge, respectively, but not to imply that prophecy can dispense with philosophy. See Muhsin Mahdi, "Alfarabi: circa 870-950," in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., History of Political Philosophy (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963), pp. 169-70. This is supported by al-Fārābī's own writings where he constantly states that philosophy must precede religion in time because the religious account depends on philosophic knowledge, and because what is contained in religion finds its demonstration in philosophy. Even in the case where religion appears in a certain nation before philosophy, al-Fārābī states that this religion must have been transferred from another nation in which it was based on philosophy. See for al-Fārābī's opinions regarding the dependence of religion on philosophy, TS, pp. 90-91; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 44-45; KM, pp. 46-47; KH, pp. 131, 154. A useful treatment of this concept is to be found in, Muhsin Mahdi, "Alfarabi on Philosophy and Religion," The Philosophical Forum 4 (April 1973):5-25.

38. TS, pp. 90-91; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 44-45.
39. VC, pp. 85-86; Siyāṣah, p. 72; PR, p. 34; TS, p. 81; KM, p. 52.
40. Siyāṣah, pp. 79-80; PR, pp. 36-37; FM, p. 47; Aphorisms, p. 40.
41. VC, pp. 97-98, 99-100; Siyāṣah, pp. 77-79; PR, p. 36.

42. PR, p. 36.
43. VC, p. 99.
44. PR, p. 39.
45. Siyāṣah, pp. 83-84; PR, p. 39; TS, pp. 63-64; Plato and Aristotle, p. 24; KM, pp. 65-66; D.P. Brewester, "Al-Farabi's Book of Religion," Abr-Nahrain 14 (1973-74):28-29 (hereafter cited as BR).
46. KM, pp. 64-66; Brewester, BR, p. 29.
47. PR, p. 39. See Siyāṣah, pp. 83-84.
48. Ibid., pp. 34, 39-40. For a full treatment of this task, see Druart, "Causation," pp. 35-45.
49. Siyāṣah, pp. 71-72; PR, p. 33.
50. PR, p. 34. See Siyāṣah, pp. 72-73.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 40. See Siyāṣah, p. 84.
53. Siyāṣah, p. 73; PR, p. 34.
54. Siyāṣah, p. 74; PR, p. 34-35.
55. Siyāṣah, p. 84; PR, p. 39-40.
56. TS, pp. 77-78; Plato and Aristotle, p. 35.
57. TS, pp. 78; Plato and Aristotle, p. 35.
58. PR, p. 40. See Siyāṣah, pp. 84-85; VC, pp. 122-23; FM, pp. 70-71; Aphorisms, p. 53.
59. This is the term al-Fārābī uses and it has to be understood as referring to the actual objects of true knowledge, as distinct from those things that imitate them.

60. TS, p. 90; Plato and Aristotle, p. 44; Siyāṣah, p. 85; PR, p. 40; VC, p. 104.
61. TS, pp. 78-79; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 35-36. Note that al-Fārābī writes that with those "who do not rise in favour of what is right willingly and of their own accord or by means of arguments" and also with those who refuse to teach others the theoretical sciences which they know, the supreme ruler should resort to the method of compulsion. See TS, pp. 79-80; Plato and Aristotle, p. 36.
62. We are speaking here exclusively about the first ruler, the founder of the virtuous regime, who must be a prophet. His successors need not be prophets, but normally must combine both theoretical and practical knowledge.
63. Plato and Aristotle, p. 66.
64. VC, pp. 103-04.
65. Mahdi, Alfarabi, pp. 166-67.
66. Plato and Aristotle, p. 43. See TS, p. 89.
67. Martin Bertman, "Alfarabi and the Concept of Happiness in Medieval Islamic Philosophy," IQ 14 (January 1970):124.
68. TS, p. 95; Plato and Aristotle, p. 48.
69. Plato and Aristotle, pp. 43-44. See TS, pp. 89-90.
70. TS, pp. 89-90; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 43-44. It should be noted though that, in the closing section of the Attainment, al-Fārābī maintains that, if no use is made of the true philosopher in society, this will not be his fault but the fault of those who do not benefit from his skills. See TS, pp. 96-97; Plato and Aristotle, p. 49.
71. Plato and Aristotle, p. 44. See TS, p. 90.
72. Plato and Aristotle, p. 42. See TS, p. 88. For this opinion, see Michael E. Marmura, "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam," in Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis, Jr., eds., Islam's Understanding of Itself



(Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1983), pp. 94ff. (hereafter cited as "Conception").

73. KM, p. 47; translation by Brewster, BR, p. 22.
74. Plato and Aristotle, p. 44. See TS, p. 90.
75. Plato and Aristotle, pp. 44-45. See TS, p. 90.
76. PR, p. 41. See Siyāṣah, pp. 85-86. See also, VC, pp. 122-23.
77. TS, p. 91; Plato and Aristotle, p. 45; KH, p. 131.
78. Siyāṣah, p. 73; PR, pp. 34-35.
79. TS, pp. 91-92; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 45-46.
80. Mahdi, Alfarabi, pp. 168-70; Marmura, "Conception", pp. 96-97; Michael E. Marmura, "The Philosopher and the Society: Some Medieval Arabic Discussions," ASQ 1 (Fall 1979):313.
81. PR, p. 41. See Siyāṣah, pp. 86-87.
82. Plato and Aristotle, p. 47. See TS, p. 94.
83. VC, pp. 105-06. Note that in the Attainment, al-Fārābī, when speaking about the true philosopher, mentions the same qualities, with the exception of the first and the fifth, i.e., physical fitness and eloquence, respectively. This can be explained by the fact that in the Attainment al-Fārābī made it clear that the conditions stated are those prescribed by Plato in the Republic. In the Virtuous City, where he is speaking on his own authority, he added the other two qualities. Hence, Sankarī is wrong in stating that all the twelve qualities are derived from Plato's Republic. We will return to this point in chapter four when speaking about the problem of dating the Epistles. See TS, pp. 94-95; Plato and Aristotle, p. 48; Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 124; Farouk A. Sankarī, "Plato and al-Fārābī: A Comparison of Some Aspects of their Political Philosophies," MW 60 (July, 1970):222 (hereafter cited as "Comparison").

84. VC, p. 106.
85. FM, p. 66; Aphorisms, p. 50. Note that in the Virtuous City al-Fārābī only refers to these six conditions without listing them. He mentions that they were listed "before". As these conditions were not previously listed in the Virtuous City, one can conclude that the term "before" refers to another work written before the Virtuous City. But these six conditions are listed only in Fusūl Muntaza'ah, hence, this suggests that the Fusūl was written before the Virtuous City.
86. VC, p. 106.
87. Ibid.
88. PR, p. 37. See Siyāṣah, p. 80.
89. VC, p. 111.
90. FM, p. 66. Sherwanī interprets al-Fārābī as maintaining that five or six of these qualities would make a good ruler. Sherwanī holds that this is the case because al-Fārābī must have realized that all the twelve qualities cannot unite in one man. This interpretation is mistaken since it seems to have missed the distinction al-Fārābī draws between the six conditions and the twelve qualities. See H.K. Sherwanī, "Al-Fārābī's Political Theories," IC 12 (July, 1938):298-99.
91. Siyāṣah, p. 80; PR, p. 37.
92. PR, p.32. See Siyāṣah, p. 69.
93. VC, p. 96; KM, pp. 53-54; TS, pp. 61-62; Plato and Aristotle, p. 23.
94. VC, p. 96.
95. TS, pp.61-62; Plato and Aristotle, p. 23.
96. KM, pp. 54-55. See Brewester, BR, p. 25.
97. An example which explains what al-Fārābī means is the disposition or power to write which is developed through practice.

98. FM, pp. 45-46.
99. Siyāṣah, p.69; PR, p. 32; VC, p. 97.
100. Siyāṣah, p.69-70; PR, p. 32; VC, p. 96-97.
101. Siyāṣah, p.70; PR, p. 32.
102. Mahdi, Alfarabi, p. 174; Sankarī, "Comparison," p. 219; Richard Walzer, "Aspects of Islamic Political Thought: Al-Fārābī and Ibn Xaldūn," Oriens 16 (1963):48.
103. See n. 83 above; VC, p. 105.
104. VC, p. 107.
105. FM, p. 66; Aphorisms, p. 50.
106. Plato and Aristotle, p. 37. See TS, pp. 80-81.
107. VC, p. 110; Siyāṣah, p. 94; PR, p. 46.
108. Siyāṣah, p. 70.
109. VC, p. 97.
110. Ibid.
111. See, for example, TS, pp. 79-81; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 35-38; KM, p. 56.
112. Siyāṣah, pp. 85-86; PR, pp. 40-41; VC, pp. 122-23.
113. VC, pp. 97-100.
114. VC, pp. 100-01; KM, pp. 64-65.
115. VC, pp. 71, 74-80.
116. VC, pp. 97-98; see also Siyāṣah, pp. 77-78.
117. Mahdi, Alfarabi, p. 165.
118. VC, p. 100; KM, pp. 65-66; Siyāṣah, p. 84; PR, p. 39.
119. KM, pp. 64-66; Siyāṣah, pp. 83-84; PR, p. 39. See also, Brewster, BR, pp. 28-29.

120. Siyāṣah, pp. 78, 80-81; PR, pp. 37-38; VC, p. 112; FM, pp. 70-71; Aphorisms, p. 53.
121. Siyāṣah, pp. 85-85; PR, p. 40; VC, pp. 121-22; FM, pp. 70-71; Aphorisms, p. 53.
122. Siyāṣah, pp. 84-86; PR, pp. 40-41; VC, pp. 122-23. Note that in the Siyāṣah, al-Fārābī mentions the first and third classes only.
123. PR, p. 41; Siyāṣah, p. 86.
124. Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, p. 37; TS, pp. 79-81; Plato and Aristotle, pp. 36-38.
125. Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, pp. 37-38. See also VC, p. 112.
126. Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, p. 38; VC, pp. 112-13.
127. TS, p. 81; Plato and Aristotle, p. 37.
128. Siyāṣah, p. 82; translation, with some amendments and alterations, from PR, p. 38. See also, VC, pp. 114-15.
129. Ibid.
130. Siyāṣah, p. 80; PR, p. 37; FM, p. 95; Aphorisms, p. 72; KM, p. 56.
131. VC, p. 120.
132. Siyāṣah, p. 101; PR, p. 51.
133. FM, p. 43; Aphorisms, pp. 37-38; Siyāṣah, p. 106; PR, p. 55.
134. KM, p. 49; the translation, with minor amendments is from Mahdi, "Alfarabi," p. 172. For the same concept, see Siyāṣah, pp. 80-81; PR, p. 37.
135. Al-Fārābī's language in the Virtuous City suggests that all the twelve qualities are required in the successor. See VC, p. 107.
136. VC, pp. 107-08; FM, p. 66; Aphorisms, pp. 50-51.
137. VC, p. 107.
138. Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, p. 37; FM, p. 67; Aphorisms, p. 51; VC, p. 107. Note that he includes here also the condition of the ability to go to war. This, however,

is not relevant to our discussion here, and hence we have omitted it from our discussion.

139. VC, pp. 107-08.

140. Siyāṣah, p. 81; PR, p. 37.

141. FM, p. 67; Aphorisms, p. 51.

142. KM, p. 60.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

144. VC, p. 126; KM, pp. 43-44.

145. VC, pp. 109-11; Siyāṣah, pp. 87ff.; PR, pp. 41ff. Note that al-Fārābī did not include the "altered city" in his discussion of the non-virtuous regimes in the Siyāṣah.

146. VC, p. 118; Siyāṣah, pp. 82-83; PR, pp. 38-39.

147. VC, pp. 119-20.

148. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

149. *Ibid.*

### **CHAPTER THREE: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN STUDYING RASĀ'IL IKHWĀN AL- ŞAFĀ': NUMBER AND ARRANGEMENT**

The researcher who studies a work like the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity faces problems that relate to the work as a structure of thought. He has to struggle with repetitiveness, expatiation, statements that are or seem to be contradictory, and ideas wrapped in the most obscure symbolism. But no less important than these are a number of problems that emerge from the circumstances that surrounded the process of writing itself. These relate to the questions of the number, the arrangement, and, above all, the authorship and the dating of the Epistles. As it will become obvious during the research, these problems are closely related to each other and investigating them separately is motivated solely by the aim to develop a clearer understanding of their nature.

These problems raise questions too grave to be ignored by any attempt aiming at a serious study of the Epistles. For if the number of the Epistles we have now differs from the number proclaimed in the work itself, would this not mean that scribal mischief plagues the work? And if this mischief means, for example, the inclusion of a spurious epistle, how can one be confident of the conclusions of his research if it is based on such a spurious work? And what about the evidence which indicates that a process of heavy rearrangement of the Epistles took place? Is the text in fact, as it appears to be, a mosaic of widely diverse subjects stuck together at random to form an incoherent work? Did the Brethren work according to a well conceived plan that aimed at presenting a systematic philosophic view or did they work less systematically improvising

as they went along? After all, who are the Brethren of Purity? The importance of clearing this up before dealing with the work itself is not easily exaggerated. This is because the doctrinal commitments of the authors are an important key to the understanding of their work. Also in the endeavour to better understand the Brethren's thought, the historical circumstances that surrounded their writing becomes all too important. But one has to fix first the era in which the Epistles were composed. Thus, it is necessary to devote some effort to investigating the question of dating.

One, however, cannot claim, taking into account the complexity of problems associated with the Epistles, that a definite answer to such questions is possible. What one can aim at here is to try and find the kind of trustworthy evidence, both internal and external, that would allow us to achieve a reasonable degree of certainty in this regard.

### I The Problem of the Number of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity

One of the main difficulties that confront us in studying the Epistles is the confusion concerning their exact number. The question is complicated not only by the conflicting medieval reports, but also by the contradicting references to this number in the text itself.

The Epistles as we have them in the three published editions are fifty-two in number excluding al-Risālah al-Jāmi'ah<sup>1</sup> (hereafter cited as the Comprehensive Epistle). Yet, the text itself gives the number as fifty-two in three places only. Two occur in the index (al-fihrist); the third in the closing remark

of the first epistle of the first section.<sup>4</sup> The number fifty-two is never again mentioned in the text. On the contrary, the assertion that the number of epistles is fifty-one is made fifteen times.<sup>3</sup> The last epistle itself, which is number fifty-two in the published editions, refers to itself in three different places as the fifty-first and the last, stating that it has been preceded by fifty epistles -- this, inspite of the fact that it is numbered fifty-second underneath its chapter-heading.<sup>4</sup> The confusion is again found in the Comprehensive Epistle. Despite the fact that it discusses all the fifty-two epistles, giving their titles, reference to the number as fifty-one still appears in some of its manuscripts.<sup>5</sup>

Early external sources are also not without confusion. Al-Tawhīdī (320-414/932-1023), who saw the work and read some of the Epistles, gives the number as fifty.<sup>6</sup> His teacher Abu Sulaymān al-Mantiqī, who was first introduced to the work by al-Tawhīdī himself, mentions fifty-one epistles.<sup>7</sup> Neither of them, it should be noted, referred to the Comprehensive Epistle. Al-Giftī, on the other hand, mentioned fifty-one epistles, including the Comprehensive Epistle among them.<sup>8</sup> Hājji Khalīfah (d. 1067/1655) mentions fifty-one epistles without counting the Comprehensive Epistle.<sup>9</sup> The Ismā'īlī Yemeni Ṭayyibī dā'ī Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1467) agrees in his book 'Uyūn al-Akhbār, with the two Ismā'īlī Syrian Nizārī dā'īs Abu al-Ma'ālī Ḥatim ibn Zuhrah (d. 497/1103) and Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 817/1414) about the number fifty-two,<sup>10</sup> yet, in his book Zahr al-Ma'ānī he mentions fifty-three epistles, the Comprehensive Epistle not mentioned by him in either book.<sup>11</sup>



This inconsistency in referring to the number of the Epistles is also found in modern scholars' writings where, however, there seems to be no recognition that the problem even exists. Some mention the number as fifty-one, apparently re-echoing the popular proclamation of the epistles in this regard, but without even referring to the fact that fifty-two epistles actually exist.<sup>12</sup> Others give the number as fifty-two. Although this is justifiable by the fact that it is the actual number of the epistles we have in the published editions, these scholars simply ignore the work's insistence on the number fifty-one.<sup>13</sup> Even the number fifty-three does not lack an advocate who obviously depends on the passage:

This is the list of contents of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Friends of Sincerity and Men of Justice and Sons of Praise and it is fifty-two epistle, and epistle dealing with the refinement of souls and reformation of morals.<sup>14</sup>

M.F. Hijāb maintains that this contradiction among scholars is due to the difference in the number of the epistles in different manuscripts. Yet, he fails to state which manuscripts he is referring to. Instead, he points to the difference in the number of epistles in the published editions. He thus points to the Leipzig, Bombay, Cairo and Beirut editions, implying that they reflect the difference in the number of epistles contained in the manuscripts they depended on.<sup>15</sup> Suffice it to say that the Leipzig edition, the only one that does not include fifty-two epistles, is not a copy of the complete Arabic text. It is mainly a recension of about forty, not fifty epistles, as Hijāb claims. Moreover, it does not follow the usual order of the original text.<sup>16</sup>

It is only recently that Y. Marquet gave this problem its due attention.<sup>17</sup> His solution for the discrepancies relating to the exact number of the epistles consists in his suggestion that an epistle must have been added later to the original fifty-one epistles.<sup>18</sup> Although he never explicitly stated that the addition to this epistle was the work of a late editor and not that of the main board of authors, his writings betray such a belief. Two remarks can be pointed out here. While speaking about the composition of the epistles, he suggests that the number of the epistles was not foreseen by the early authors and that towards the end, the last circle in the chain of authors rounded off the number to fifty-one in order to meet their arithmological views.<sup>19</sup> In a second remark, he suggests that the added epistle could have been a draft of an epistle that was left to be rewritten, but was apparently neglected and later re-discovered and included in its primitive form in the text.<sup>20</sup>

S.H. Nasr, on the other hand, and later I.R. Netton, explicitly expressed their conviction that the original number of the epistles left by the Brethren is fifty-one and that an epistle, which in this case is a forged one, was added later. Nasr proceeds to prove this by emphasizing the importance of the number fifty-one in the Jabirean and the Ismā'īlī traditions. Assuming the influence of both on the Brethren, he implies that they wrote fifty-one epistles in order to meet their norms. Netton, on the other hand, when pointing out the significance of the number fifty-one for the Brethren, stresses only the Jabirean influence in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

Although the theory of a late editorial interference suggested by Marquet, Nasr and Netton may resolve the internal inconsistencies relating to the number of the epistles, it still faces a serious difficulty. This is because, if this theory is to be accepted, then one would have to conclude that the Comprehensive Epistle is spurious. For it does not only give the titles of all fifty-two epistles, but it also discusses the content and intention of each of them in an elaborate manner and in almost the same order we have in the text. The same could be said about the index which gives the titles of the fifty-two epistles and mentions the Comprehensive Epistle. Thus, to say that the extra epistle was added by a late editor would mean that both the index and the Comprehensive Epistle, which mention fifty-two epistles, were written after this extra epistle was added to the text. Taking into account, however, that both the index and the Comprehensive Epistle are frequently referred to in the main text<sup>22</sup> renders such a possibility extremely remote. It is, moreover, very significant that the literary style of the Comprehensive Epistle and the terminology it uses make it very unlikely that it is the product of an authorship that differs from that of the rest of the Epistles. In this connection, A. Hamdani's opinion on this matter should be noted.

Although Hamdani agrees with the other authors that originally the Epistles numbered fifty-one, he believes that the extra epistle is not a late addition. According to him, the fifty-first and fifty-second epistles in our editions were both composed by the main authors in a final form with the intention of retaining only one of them to be the fifty-first and last. Hamdani argues that both were retained. He also maintains that after all the fifty-two epistles, as

well as the Comprehensive Epistle and the index, were completed, the author-editor corrected the references to the number of the epistles in the index and the first epistle, but never went beyond that.<sup>23</sup>

Although we think Hamdani's thesis that the addition of the extra epistle is the work of the main board of authors is correct, the arguments he uses to support it are questionable. If, as he holds, the authors were working according to a previously established plan, why would they then, towards the end, hesitate regarding the subject of the last epistle, write two epistles and then postpone the decision on which one to choose? His argument becomes even less convincing when he maintains that later on they, in fact, retained both epistles. Whatever the logic that lies behind his argument, he presents us with no compelling evidence for it.

There is even greater disagreement among scholars regarding the related question of which epistle is the extra one. Some scholars, like Netton, have refrained altogether from giving any opinion on this matter. Nasr, on the other hand, asserts that the added epistle is the fifty-second epistle in our editions giving no argument to support this claim.<sup>24</sup>

Hamdani, as we saw, does not exactly say that an epistle was added. He maintains that an epistle that should have been discarded was retained, thus raising the number to fifty-two. This epistle, according to him, is the fifty-first in our editions, whereas the fifty-second is actually the fifty-first and last. He bases this on the fact that the fifty-second epistle in our editions refers to itself as the fifty-first and last.<sup>25</sup> But the more plausible explanation for

this is that the order of the fifty-second epistle is altered, not that the fifty-first is the extra one. For, if one accepts Hamdani's view that both epistles were written but with the intention of retaining only one, one would have to answer the question: why would the authors assert in only one epistle that it is the fifty-first and last? One would also have to ask why, if the authors decided to retain the other epistle, did they not place the one that alludes to its number in the fifty-first place and put the other at the end where it normally should be?

Marquet also believes that the extra epistle is the fifty-first in our editions. But, while agreeing with Hamdani on this point, he differs from him in the two reasons he gives. He first of all argues that the subject matter of this epistle does not fit in the fourth section in which it is placed but in the second.<sup>26</sup> This, however, is not a very strong argument, for the unsuitability of the subject matter of an epistle to the section in which it is placed is not peculiar to the fifty-first epistle. Striking examples of this are the seventh and eighth epistles of the first section. The subject matter of both these epistles, according to the authors themselves, belongs to the second section.<sup>27</sup> Other possible examples are: the ninth epistle of the first section which should belong to the second<sup>28</sup> and the seventh epistle of the third section which should belong to the fourth.<sup>29</sup> If one follows Marquet's reasoning and accepts the ill-fitted placing of the fifty-first epistle, one would have to also conclude that any of the epistles mentioned above are equal candidates for being the extra epistle.

Marquet's second reason is that five of the nine pages of the fifty-first epistle are identical with pages 167-172 of the twenty-first epistle and that the remaining four pages do not add anything new.<sup>30</sup> This suggestion implies that the fifty-first epistle is no more than an extract from other earlier epistles or, at best, that it consists of a first draft of an epistle that was left to be rewritten but was discarded. This second argument is also not very convincing. Marquet's claim concerning the identity of the last five pages of the fifty-first epistle and pages 167-172 of the twenty-first epistle is not quite true. The wording is not exactly the same. A paragraph exalting and praising God in page 171 of the twenty-first epistle is missing from the fifty-first epistle. Moreover, the last page of the fifty-first epistle does not have an equivalent in the pages of the twenty-first epistle claimed by Marquet to be identical. This is not to deny that a distinctive similarity in the wording and the subject matter does exist in the equivalent pages pointed out by Marquet in the fifty-first and twenty-first epistles. But his claim that there is here total identity is an unwarranted exaggeration.

More important than this is that this similarity should not lead one to the conclusion that the fifty-first epistle is either an extract from the twenty-first epistle or a first draft of an epistle that was not completed. A thorough examination of the fifty-first epistle as a whole and of the relevant pages of the twenty-first epistle show that this conclusion is untenable.

To start by examining the fifty-first epistle, one finds that the striking feature that might show it as an incomplete epistle is its shortness, especially

when compared with the two epistles that precede and follow it. Yet, the shortness of an epistle should not be a decisive factor here because the epistles differ drastically in their length, with some having the same number of pages as the fifty-first epistle.<sup>31</sup> More instructive in this regard is the structure of the epistle itself. The nine pages that constitute the epistle present a coherent, well-connected discussion, concordant with the epistle's title and it ends appropriately with a paragraph that is typical of the closing remarks of many other epistles.

The lack of original material in the fifty-first epistle is not peculiar to it. The work as a whole tends to be repetitive. Similar subjects are discussed in different parts of various epistles. We even have chapters in some epistles that are discussed thereafter as complete, independent epistles.<sup>32</sup> The similarity of wording, mentioned by Marquet, in the two epistles is not peculiar either. Another example is the similarity of pages 57-60 of the fourth epistle of the fourth section and pages 173-177 of the seventh epistle of the same section. This will not make us conclude that one of them is extracted from the other, let alone that it is a later addition. A possible explanation of such a similarity is that the authors, being aware that at a certain point in the epistle they would be discussing something previously discussed in some other epistle, consulted a copy of the latter to refresh their memory.

Thus, in the twenty-first epistle the authors give a piece of information indicating the presence of this same piece of information "in one of our epistles."<sup>33</sup> In the fifty-first epistle, the authors replaced the phrase, "in one of our epistles," by "as we mentioned in the epistle about plants."<sup>34</sup> Clearly these cross-references

indicate that the authors when writing the twenty-first epistle were well aware that they would be discussing the same point later on -- this happened to be in the fifty-first epistle. If this proves anything, it would be that the fifty-first epistle was initially intended as a separate and complete epistle.

Another indication relevant to this question seems to have escaped Marquet's attention. All of the fifty-first epistle, with the sole exception of its closing remark, is to be found word for word at the end of the thirty-fourth epistle.<sup>35</sup> These identical pages are introduced in both the Cairo and Beirut editions with the editor's remark "this is the end of the epistle, and after it there is an added part which does not exist in all manuscripts and it could have been added from earlier epistles."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the Cairo edition does not indicate on which manuscript it is based and the Beirut edition is simply a reproduction of the Cairene. Hence, it is difficult to determine in which manuscript this addition occurs and from which it is missing. What is significant here, however, is that the fifty-first epistle is added in some manuscripts to the thirty-fourth epistle and that this addition is entire and ad verbum. The addition of the fifty-first epistle to the thirty-fourth without the slightest attempt to make it seem a coherent part of it is very artificial. This suggests further that the fifty-first epistle was written as a separate epistle. It seems that after its composition, the authors thought of adding it to the thirty-fourth epistle. Most probably, they effected this addition in a copy that was released. This would explain why some manuscripts have it as a part of the thirty-fourth epistle. However, the fact that some other manuscripts do not have it as a part of this thirty-fourth epistle makes it obvious



that when concluding the work, the authors decided to keep it as a separate epistle. It is, thus, that we find it mentioned as epistle number fifty-one in the index. More indicative in this regard is that the Comprehensive Epistle's discussion of the content of the thirty-fourth epistle does not include this additional part, which it discusses later as we have it in the main text: a separate epistle which it numbers the fifty-first.<sup>37</sup>

The most important conclusion we derive so far is that all the fifty-two epistles which we have now are the work of the original board of authors. The index which gives the exact titles and a short note about all fifty-two epistles, as well as the Comprehensive Epistle which discusses the content of them all in detail, make this obvious beyond any doubt.

The reference of the Brethren to the number fifty-one fifteen times in their work indicates that this was the number they planned to write. It seems that some time towards the end of their task, they started thinking of adding an extra epistle to the text; thus, the third section about the psychological sciences, which was, most probably, the last to be composed, is devoid of any reference to the number of the epistles. Yet, since the index and the Comprehensive Epistle mention the fifty-two epistles, even though the text gives the number as fifty-one, this indicates that a change in the number had been effected by the original authors and proclaimed in these two works.

Beyond this most important fact which proves the authenticity of the fifty-two epistles and builds our confidence as researchers in the work as a genuine representation of the Brethren's thought, nothing can be defended as certain.

One thus has to offer explanations that, relative to the available data, seem the more probable. Thus, regarding the discrepancy in the numbering of the epistles, the explanation that seems to us more plausible is as follows.

The authors did not correct the number of the epistles in the work, I think, not because as Hamdani suggests they made a hasty revision of the work before they published it,<sup>38</sup> but because they never edited the work and never revised it as a whole for publication. A significant remark in one of their epistles confesses that it is highly unlikely that all the epistles would be in the possession of one man.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that whenever they finished an epistle they used to give it to a copyist which means that by the time they finished writing, the epistles were dispersed. Thus, the only "editing" they could have affected relates to the arranging of the epistles in the order they proclaimed in the Comprehensive Epistle and the index. As such, the reference to the number fifty-one, the allusions in some epistles to their order which differ from what we actually have according to the index and the Comprehensive Epistle and the cross-reference in some earlier epistles to the content of later ones without giving their titles would remain uncorrected.

Admittedly, the correcting of the number in the first epistle (but not the others) is puzzling. An initial possible solution, namely that this epistle was the last to have been written, seems implausible, not only because of the centrality of its subject matter, but also because of the frequent references to it throughout the epistles. A more plausible solution is that a late copyist, being aware of what comes in the index, corrected the number to fifty-two in this first epistle

then forgot to do the same in the late epistles,<sup>40</sup> or decided not to, after he found that the rest of the work always referred to the number as fifty-one.

Regarding the question as to which epistle is the one that was decided to be written in a late stage, again there are no positive indications to give a definite answer. The first logical consideration is to see whether there is an epistle which is never referred to in the other epistles and which presumably would be among the latest to be decided upon. Unfortunately there are three such epistles in the work: the sixth, the eighth and the tenth of the third section. A possible answer is that the added epistle was not created anew, but had already been written and then split up into two epistles, rendering the number of the epistles fifty-two.

This at best is a possibility. Yet, its existence is not at all remote taking into account the heavy process of rearrangement to which we will now turn.

## II The Problem of the Arrangement of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity

The evidence that the Epistles were not originally written in the order we have now is quite compelling. Surprisingly, this evidence, until very recently, has generally been ignored. Credit must be given to Marquet who, as far as we know, was the first to address himself to the question of the arrangement of the Epistles.

Marquet maintains that evidence does exist that indicates that some epistles were written before the others. He feels that the fourth section as a whole is the earliest to have been written.<sup>41</sup> In this section, he suggests that the oldest is the forty-eighth epistle because, as he reads the text, it predicts the imminent appearance of the hidden imām of the Ismā'ilīs and is put directly in his own words. Thus, according to him, it was written before the establishment of the Fāṭimids in Ifrīqiyah in 297/909. Again, he maintains that the fiftieth epistle which announces the same message and is also couched in the words of the expected imām is the second to be written. This is because, as he reads the text, it was only partially composed before the 297/909 victory of the Fāṭimids.<sup>42</sup> The section in the fourth epistle that deals with the subject of the succession of states belongs, according to him, to this same pre-Fāṭimid period and is later inserted in the fourth epistle.<sup>43</sup> Then came the forty-fourth epistle which, for Marquet, was written in 298/910 shortly after the establishment of the Fāṭimid Caliphate because, according to him, it explicitly expresses this triumph.<sup>44</sup> The poem in the forty-seventh epistle contains, as Marquet claims, evidence that this epistle was composed at the time of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Qā'im (322-34/934-46).<sup>45</sup> The most recent epistle in the text as a whole, Marquet goes on, is the epistle of the animals, the eighth in the second section, which constitutes the major part of the work.<sup>46</sup>

Turning to Marquet's view of the reordering of the epistles as a whole, he argues that according to the wording of the eighth epistle of the first section, its place was in the third section. Again, the ninth epistle of this first section,

according to its introduction, was written originally after the twenty-fifth epistle (the eleventh of the second section). A paragraph in the first epistle of the second section, Marquet argues, clearly denotes that, at least until the completion of this epistle, the first section contained only five epistles and not fourteen as we have them now, that the five epistles dealing with logic were all piled up in one epistle, that the fourth epistle on geography was added later, that the fifth on music was part of the sixth on numerical and geometrical relationships, that the second section consisted of eight epistles and not seventeen, that the sixth epistle of this section on the quiddity of nature was added later, and that the tenth was originally the second.<sup>47</sup> The fourth section also did not escape this process of rearrangement. The order of the forty-ninth epistle, Marquet argues, is uncertain because in the fifty-second epistle, the author gives a piece of information and refers the readers to "the previous epistle," while in fact it applies to the forty-ninth epistle and not the fifty-first.<sup>48</sup>

Hamdani, on the other hand, believes that the epistles were originally written in almost the same order that came down to us. He states that nothing in the forty-fourth epistle indicates that it was written to proclaim the establishment of the Fāṭimid Caliphate, that the terms in the poem of the forty-seventh epistle could be interpreted otherwise and that the change in the order of the eighth and the ninth epistles was effected by the authors in the stage of planning the order, rather than in a stage of late revision.<sup>49</sup>

At issue in this controversy is the question of whether or not the authors of the epistles were working according to a well-laid out plan already set forth.

The thesis of Marquet which confirms a wholesale rearrangement of the epistles means an ill-planned work which was not put in its final form until a very late stage. Hamdani's view, on the other hand, means that, barring some minor rearrangements, the epistles were the result of a well-planned work that followed a pre-designed sequence of composition by a board of authors with a clear and systematic scheme. The difficulty here is that one can find evidence in the text that supports both theses.

To take Hamdani's thesis first, evidence does exist that support a well-organized, previously designed work. Thus, for example, one finds support for this thesis in the frequent references to the number of epistles as fifty-one which is very close to the actual number we have now. Many of these references come in section four, more precisely in some of its epistles which, as will be shown shortly, are among the earliest to be written.<sup>50</sup> More indicative still is the fact that all four sections have an abundance of cross-references to epistles from other sections either by title or to the content. Section four, in particular, includes references to epistles from the other three sections that are most probably composed after a good part of it had been written.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, there is compelling evidence that the work, as Marquet holds, had undergone heavy rearrangement. In fact, Marquet's view that the fourth section was the first to be composed is not entirely wrong. One, however, has to say that it is not quite accurate. Evidence can be found to support the fact that some of the epistles of the fourth section, but not all of them (as Marquet holds) are the earliest to be composed. The evidence consists of two things.

The first is the frequent reference in the first section of the epistle devoted to the mathematical sciences to some epistles from the fourth section. These references give the titles of the epistles and even the titles of chapters of these epistles in a very accurate way.<sup>52</sup> This indicates that these particular epistles of the fourth section were already written and titled when the first section was being composed. These epistles are the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eleventh of the fourth section of our editions.

The second piece of evidence is that the cross-references to some epistles of the fourth section are given in this section not by title, as it has usually been the case throughout the text, but by their order. Thus we find frequent references to "the first epistle," "the second epistle," "the third epistle" and "the first two epistles."<sup>53</sup> What is significant about this is that these references never specify to which section this first, second or third epistle belongs. This shows that these three epistles of the fourth section referred to by their order were the first to be written and that only after the number of the epistles grew and probably after the idea of distributing the epistles among several sections evolved that the Brethren discovered the unsuitability of this way of reference and deserted it to the use of titles.

Internal evidence from the work helps us determine which are these three epistles that were the first to be written. Are they then the same epistles which Marquet claims as the earliest to be composed? In fact Marquet's thesis concerning the precedence of the forty-fourth, the forty-seventh and the forty-eighth (but not the fiftieth) epistles is quite correct. The arguments, however, he presents

to support his thesis are defective. These arguments consist in interpreting the wording of the text quite artificially to make it yield his pre-conceived conclusions concerning its Ismā'īlī authorship. Thus, a thorough examination of the content of the forty-eighth and fiftieth epistles leaves us with nothing which would prove that they were put directly into the mouth of an imām. Like all other epistles they are written anonymously in the third person plural and are addressed to the brother and brethren. Neither of them deals with any political ideas, and both concentrate primarily on the Brethren's theory of knowledge. All that the forty-eighth epistle advocates is the importance of knowledge as the only way for the soul to attain its salvation and the urging of the Brethren to gradually introduce potential followers to the kind of knowledge explained in the epistles. Again, when we turn to the fiftieth epistle, we find that it records and discusses the case of a seeker after knowledge who sought to meet the Brethren and when they found him to be capable of grasping the kind of knowledge they were teaching, they decided to instruct him and to make him one of their disciples. The forty-fourth epistle, as Hamdani rightly points out, has nothing in it to indicate that it was written in 298/910 to celebrate the triumph of the Fāṭimids. As its introduction reveals, its main theme is the Brethren's belief in the immortality of the soul.

It is true some parts in these three epistles, if interpreted allegorically, might reveal an air of politics about them. Examples of these are the story of the philosopher-physician in the forty-fourth epistle who used peaceful methods to heal the sick and later, with the support of the cured ones, he resorted to



force in order to cure the rest<sup>54</sup>; also in the forty-eighth epistle, the speeches about the close appearance of the cause of the Brethren and the end of the period of concealment<sup>55</sup>; and then in the fiftieth epistle, the reference to the hardships that those who seek to follow the path of the Brethren face and the loss of their fortunes and their beloved ones which they endure happily for the sake of the cause.<sup>56</sup>

But, if one takes seriously the main thrust of what the Brethren are seeking throughout the work, one must conclude that it has very little to do with politics. Again and again, the epistles harp on the importance of purifying the soul through the attainment of true knowledge. There is constant emphasis on the hardship one faces in the endeavour to shake the soul from the accumulation of ignorance and in this way to free it from the prison of earthly needs. There is also emphasis on the hardship the Brethren face in teaching and guiding the potential brethren to the path of salvation. Their message is that of universal ethics that is both philosophical and in harmony with the generally accepted attitude of Islamic piety. Contrary to what Marquet maintains, these epistles have nothing to do with the *Ismā'īlī da'wah*. This renders his other claim that the composition of these epistles preceded the establishment of the Fātimids quite arbitrary. In this regard, Marquet's claim that the poem in the forty-seventh epistle proves that it was written during the reign of al-Qā'im calls for comment. Marquet's allegorical interpretations of terms like "al-dajjal," "the sun that rises from the west" and "al-marid" which favours a political meaning is again quite arbitrary. The poem itself is introduced and concluded with a clear statement about its aim. This

aim has nothing to do with politics and is purely gnostic. The Brethren's concern is to give examples of some issues that are discussed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah in a symbolic way. They draw attention to the importance that they should continue to be interpreted in the same way and that the uncovering of their true meaning should only be permitted to those who are intellectually capable of capturing it without destroying their faith.<sup>57</sup> As will be shown when discussing the political theories of al-Fārābī and the Brethren, the notion of exoteric (zahir) and esoteric (batin) meaning of the Qur'ān is not an Ismā'īlī doctrine per se. It is a generally accepted concept among Muslim philosophers which is based entirely on philosophical considerations.

In short Marquet's allegorical interpretation of the subject matter of these four epistles, as we see it, is highly subjective and should not be used as a criterion for determining their arrangement. Even when one agrees with some of his conclusions regarding the order of these epistles, one must use a more objective criterion. Using the generally accepted textual approach in exploring the fourth section one can show that three of these four epistles, namely, the forty-fourth, the forty-seventh and forty-eighth, were the earliest to be written.

A reference in the seventh epistle of the fourth section to a symbolic story about a philosopher-physician refers the reader to "the first epistle of the Brethren of Purity" where he can find the story in detail.<sup>58</sup> But this story does not come either in the first epistle of the work as a whole or even in the first epistle of the fourth section, but in the third epistle of this fourth section.<sup>59</sup> This means that the third epistle of the fourth section was actually

the first epistle to be written.

Another reference that comes in both the third and fourth epistles of the fourth section, to the Brethren's spiritual city refers the reader to "the second epistle" where he can find a detailed explanation of the nature of this city.<sup>60</sup> But again this explanation is not to be found either in the second epistle of the work or in the second epistle of the fourth section but in the seventh epistle of this section.<sup>61</sup> The fact that this epistle was the second to be written is proved further by the reference that comes in the fourth epistle of the fourth section to the four kinds of books that act as the source of the Brethren's knowledge. Here they state that they had mentioned these books in "the second epistle."<sup>62</sup> Again this piece of information comes in the seventh epistle of the fourth section.<sup>63</sup>

In the second epistle of the fourth section they mention the people who have good souls but who have not as yet attained the truth and remind their brethren of the importance of gradually introducing such people to true knowledge according to the system described in "the first two epistles."<sup>64</sup> But this in fact comes in the third and seventh epistles of the fourth section.<sup>65</sup> This leaves no doubt that these two epistles were originally the first and second.

In the seventh epistle of the fourth section, they refer the reader to "the third epistle" where he can find the twelve attributes of the prophet.<sup>66</sup> However, these attributes are counted in the sixth epistle of the fourth section.<sup>67</sup> This indicates that this epistle was actually the third to have been written.

To sum up, it is obvious from reliable internal evidence that a considerable part of the fourth section was written at a very early stage of the composition of the work and, as Marquet rightly concluded, the forty-fourth, forty-seventh and forty-eighth epistles were written before the epistles that constitute the work as a whole. Marquet, influenced by the belief that the authors are Ismā'īlīs, gives these epistles the third, fourth and first positions respectively. Internal evidence, namely the cross-reference given in the text, indicates, however, that their original order is the first, third and second respectively.

The same process of rearrangement is true of other sections. In addition to what Marquet suggested in this regard, the wording of the seventh epistle of the first section reveals that the two epistles dealing with art, that is, the seventh and the eighth of the first section, originally belonged to the second section about physical sciences.<sup>68</sup> Later however, as Marquet rightly observes, the eighth was at first placed in the third section about the psychological sciences, then both it and the seventh were placed in the first section where they are now.

As for the second section, the order of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first epistles is obviously altered. This is clear if we compare the number given under the head-titles of these epistles with the number given at the end of them.<sup>69</sup> As for Marquet's remarks concerning the arrangement of the epistles of this section, according to the information given in its first epistle (the fifteenth with regard to the whole work) they are reliable with one exception. Marquet's belief that the epistle Al-Hās wa al-Mahsūs (On

Sense, Perception, and the Perceived), the tenth of the second section in our editions, was originally the second of this section is based on a misreading of the relevant passage in the fifteenth epistle.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, nothing in this passage points to the epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived as one of the epistles of the second section, let alone making it the second of this section. This passage states that the epistles of the second section are seven in number. It begins by giving the title of each of these seven epistles. But after mentioning the title of the first epistle and stating that it discusses the necessary elements of bodies, an interposing statement occurs to the effect that as regarding the contingent elements of bodies, they have been mentioned briefly in the epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived. Marquet thought that this reference to this epistle by its title is an indication that it was to be the second in this section. But this could not be so because after this interposing statement concerning the epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived, the listing of the titles of the remaining six epistles of the second section is resumed not only by their title but also by their order. The epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived, it has to be noted, is neither listed nor counted as one of the seven. Marquet himself admitted that the paragraph is confusing because despite its statement that the number of the epistles of the second section is seven, it gives eight titles.<sup>71</sup> Yet, it is obvious from the wording of the paragraph that the eighth title: On Sense, Perception and the Perceived was not included by the authors as one of the epistles of the second section at the time of writing this paragraph in the fifteenth epistle. But this same

paragraph gives also the titles of the epistles that constituted the first section at that time and the epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived was not included among the epistles of this first section either. We are, thus, left with one of two alternatives, either of which would indicate that the Brethren did not have a clear idea about the arrangement of the work they launched on writing it.

The first is that this epistle was one of the epistles of the fourth section and was later put in its place as the tenth of the second section. If this was true, it would further prove that some of the epistles of the fourth section were written before a good part of both the first and the second sections were composed. The second is that at the time of writing of the fifteenth epistle, the epistle On Sense, Perception and the Perceived was already composed in a final form that allowed them to refer to its title and content, but that it was not yet decided to which section it would be affiliated. This shows that, although the Brethren could have had a fairly clear idea at an early stage about the content of the epistles they wanted to write, they did not have such a clear idea about the sections of the work in general and the epistles that would form each section in particular. In fact, there is internal evidence that further supports the actual existence of this deficiency.

The Brethren classify the sciences into the propaedeutic (riyādiyyah), the religious (shar‘iyyah) and the philosophical (falsafiyah). The philosophical sciences, in their turn, are divided into the mathematical sciences, logical sciences, physical sciences and divine sciences.<sup>72</sup> This division differs from what they actually

followed in their work. Here they made logic part of the mathematical sciences, while the psychological sciences, which were theoretically a branch of the divine sciences, were stretched in a separate section to give us the form: mathematical/ logical, physical, psychological and divine sciences.

But although this classification is the one they preferred and finally decided to adopt, it is obvious that this decision was not reached until a relatively late stage of their task. The second epistle of the fourth section indicates that their idea about the sections of the work was still in an early formative stage. Only a section about the mathematical sciences is mentioned by title. This is followed by a short description of the content of the section about divine sciences and of the Comprehensive Epistle but without mentioning the title of either of them. Nothing about their intention to write sections about physical or psychological sciences is mentioned.<sup>73</sup>

A more developed statement, but which still falls short of the final division they adopted, is the one given in the first epistle of the second section. Here it becomes clear that a section dealing with the physical sciences in addition to the previously decided upon sections was to be composed. A clear idea about the seven epistles which were to constitute this second section existed and the epistles that already constituted the first section were also mentioned. This statement also shows that their decision to add logic to the mathematical sciences was already taken at that time. Nevertheless, it is obvious from this statement that at this stage they thought of logic as consisting of one epistle only.<sup>74</sup>

Reference to logic as consisting of five epistles occurs only in their most developed discussion of the division of their work. This is in the seventh epistle of the first section,<sup>75</sup> which, as previously shown, actually belongs to the second section. Its detailed account about the sections of the sciences, the branches that constitute each science and the reference by title and order to the five logical epistles proves not only that it belongs to the second section, but that it was also written sometime after the first epistle of this section. The important contribution of this third statement is its exposure of the Brethren's intention, until this developed stage, to continue to regard the psychological sciences as a branch of the divine sciences and to contribute to these sciences only one epistle.<sup>76</sup> This is further proved by a reference to "the epistle on psychological sciences"<sup>77</sup> which is quite significant in this regard and shows that the decision to stretch the psychological sciences in a separate section came at a considerably late stage. In fact, the only place in the text that gives a classification of sciences that is identical with what we have in the work comes as late as the fifty-second epistle, the last in our published editions.<sup>78</sup>

Alterations in the order of the epistles in each section and between sections is not the only aspect that affected the composition of the epistles in a way that would reveal an ill-planned work. Evidence from the work shows that certain epistles were mingled with others, while others were split up. A striking example of the first case is an epistle that is referred to in three different places of the work by the title Ajnās al-‘ulūm (Categories of Sciences). But in the work we have today, this is not a separate epistle but is only a chapter in the seventh



epistle on the theoretical arts.<sup>79</sup>

Examples of the second case are numerous. In addition to what Marquet indicates concerning the five epistles of logic that were originally one epistle and the two epistles dealing with music and numerical relationships which were actually one epistle, it seems that the twenty-sixth epistle (the twelfth of the second section) and the thirty-fourth epistle (the third of the third section) did undergo the same process of division. They are referred to more than once as one epistle and, in fact, their subject matter is closely related.<sup>80</sup> The same could be said about the two epistles of the third section dealing with "al-mabādī" (intelligibles). The first of them deals with the view of Pythagorus concerning intelligibles while the second deals with the view of the Brethren themselves with regard to the same subject. But the Brethren, as they themselves admit, are pythagorians with respect to this issue and the subject matter of both epistles is quite related.<sup>81</sup> Again cross-references in the work are usually given to the epistle on intelligibles, without specifying which of the two epistles dealing with this subject is meant,<sup>82</sup> an indication that they may have been one epistle. Moreover the fifty-second epistle and the third epistle were most probably at first written as one and then were split up. Reference is given to them once as one epistle<sup>83</sup> and the fifty-second epistle asserts two times that the third epistle acts as an introduction to it and has to be consulted when reading it.<sup>84</sup>

A third aspect of the composition of the epistles is that the original titles of some epistles were later changed. Even more serious than this is the fact that some epistles that were promised to be written or at least mentioned

by title do not exist in the editions we have now. Two examples of the first case are the epistle al-Haiḡlī wa al-Ṣurah wa al-Ḥarakah wa al-Zamān wa al-Makān wa ma fihā min al-Maʿānī Idhā Udif Baʿduhā ilā Baʿd (Explication of Matter, Form, Motion, Time, Place and their Interrelationship) which is referred to once as Risālat Samʿ al-Kayān,<sup>85</sup> and the epistle al-Nāmūs al-Ilāhī wa Sharāʿit al-Nubuwwah wa Kamiyat Khisālihīm wa Madhāhib al-Rabanniyyīn wa al-Ilāhiyyīn (The Divine Law, the Conditions of Prophecy and the Ways of the Godly) which is referred to as Risālat Siyāsāt al-Nubuwwah wa al-Mulk (The Epistle on the Politics of Prophethood and of Kingship).<sup>86</sup>

Regarding the case where they promised to write certain epistles which at present do not exist, it should be noted that most of the examples fall in the realm of politics. In the forty-seventh epistle, they promise to give an account of the forty-five attributes of prophethood in an up-coming epistle; but this never took place.<sup>87</sup> More vital to our purpose is their promise to compose an epistle about the politics of those who succeed the prophets in the rulership of the regimes established by the latter.<sup>88</sup> But this important epistle does not exist. Even the epistle which discusses the conditions of prophecy and which they referred to once as the epistle on the Politics of Prophethood and of Kingship does not have anything substantial about the politics of the successors of the prophets and is entirely devoted to a discussion of the political role of the prophet himself. More serious is the fact that in their discussion of the division of the sciences, they make political science a branch of the divine sciences and divide the former into five sections, stating that for each of them they have devoted

an epistle.<sup>89</sup> But from the description of the content of each section as they give it, we find that it is only the prophetic politics that enjoys a complete epistle by itself,<sup>90</sup> that private policy and self-policy form one chapter in the fiftieth epistle<sup>91</sup> and that public politics is not dealt with at all, while monarchical politics is referred to only in passing in scattered places.<sup>92</sup>

In conclusion, taking into account the evidence that supports the two opposing opinions represented by Hamdani and Marquet, one can say that the authors of the epistles, most probably, had an early clear idea about the aim of their work and its content. It seems that they put a general plan before they began writing, in which the epistles they wanted to compose in order to cover the subjects they arrived at counted fifty-one. The fact that many epistles were amplified or split-up, which Marquet utilized in order to prove that the number was not foreseen as fifty-one until a late stage, can be used to prove the opposite. Because they decided beforehand, and stated in different places, that the number is fifty-one, they were forced to amplify, split-up and even to discard some epistles in order to round off the number to the figure they decided upon and proclaimed.

However, it is quite obvious that the fine distribution of these epistles among the four sections we have now was not clear from the beginning. Only the mathematical and divine sciences seem to have held their attention before they started to write. Furthermore, they seem to have decided to have the epistles divided among these two sections. This shows that "The Divine Science" is in fact the core of their whole work. The mathematical sciences were very important

because they helped prove their concept of God. Then, as we see it, came the decision to devote some of the epistles to a section about the physical sciences. At a considerably later stage, the decision to compose the third section about the psychological sciences was taken and it seems that epistles were borrowed from other sections to help form it. An example of this is Risālat fī al-Ba'ṭh wa al-Qiyāmah (On Resurrection), which according to the seventh epistle is part of the fourth section.<sup>93</sup>

But it is very important to realize that all alterations in the order of the epistles, as well as all the amplifications and splittings, were effected by the main board of authors because the index and the Comprehensive Epistle give us the titles of the epistles in the same number and order we have in our editions. Only one exception to this exists. The fourth epistle about geography and the fifth about music appear both in the index and the Comprehensive Epistle as the fifth and fourth respectively. This means that their order is switched in the text by a later editor.<sup>94</sup>

At the root of the controversy between Marquet and Hamdani regarding the organization of the work and the question of pre-planning are two divergent theories relating to the authorship and dating of the work. Marquet explicitly states that his attempts to prove a wholesale rearrangement of the epistles is in support of his thesis that the composition of the work extended over a long period and involved a chain of authors who lived at different times. Hamdani, on the other hand, in an attempt to prove his thesis that the epistles were composed in a relatively short time by a committee of authors who worked

simultaneously, backs the view that the work was exposed only to minor rearrangement and revision hardly sufficient to indicate that the epistles were written over a long span of time by consecutive authors.

This brings us to the subject of the authorship and dating of the Epistles.

## ENDNOTES

1. The Brethren describe the Comprehensive Epistle as being the ultimate aim of all their Epistles. They state that the essence of their thought is included therein, and that it is the demonstration of their truth. They also maintain that it was written after the Epistles in order to elucidate the realities contained in them. See RIS, 1:39, 42-43; RJ, 1:71, 139; 2:472. A close examination shows, however, that, although it sometimes provides explanations of some terms and ideas contained in the Epistles, it consists largely of summaries (uneven in quality) of each of the Epistles.

The Comprehensive Epistle was first published in Damascus in two volumes (1949, 1951) under the auspices of al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī, edited with an introduction and index by Jamīl Ṣalībā. The second publication appeared in Beirut in 1974, edited by Muṣṭafā Ghālīb who ascribed it to the Ismā'īlī Imam Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allah. Al-Risālah al-Jāmi'ah: Tāj Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā wa Khillān al-Wafā, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālīb, 2 vols. in one (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1974). Unless otherwise stated, references in this thesis will be made to this Beirut edition.

A certain Risālat Jāmi'at al-Jāmi'ah is edited by 'Arif Tāmīr and was published as one of the Brethren's works. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa Khillān al-Wafā, Risālat Jāmi'at al-Jāmi'ah, ed. 'Arif Tāmīr (Beirut: Dār al-Naṣr li al-Jāmi'iyyin, 1959). In one place of Ivanow's guide to Ismā'īlī literature, this Epistle appears with the remark that the author is unknown. A few pages later Ivanow writes that this Epistle is sometimes ascribed to the third Fatimid Caliph, al-Manṣūr. See Wladimir Ivanow, A Guide to Ismā'īlī Literature, Prize Publication Fund, vol. 8 (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1933), pp. 31, 36 (hereafter cited as Guide).

In one of his works, Tāmīr attributes it, however, to the third hidden imam, Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad. 'Arif Tāmīr, al-Imāmah fī al-Islām (Beirut: Dār al-Kātib al-'Arabī, Baghdād: Maktabat al-Nahḍah, n.d.), p. 183 (hereafter

cited as Imamah). Ghālib, however, an Ismā'īlī himself, mentions that this epistle is never referred to in any of the original Ismā'īlī works. He suggests that it might be a summary of some of the epistles written by leading Ismā'īlī figures in Syria. See Muṣṭafā Ghālib, Ikhwān al-Safā wa Khillān al-Wafā, Fī Sabīl Mawsū'ah Falsafiyah (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1979), pp. 30-31 (hereafter cited as lkhwān). An examination of this work shows that it is only a summary of some of the chapters of the Comprehensive Epistle. Because this work is never referred to in the Epistles themselves and because of the doubts surrounding the authenticity of its attribution to the Brethren, we will not be making use of it. For a similar opinion, see Jamal al-Dīn, Falsafat al-Tarbiyah, pp. 32-33; Hījab, al-Falsafah, pp. 83-84; al-'Abd, al-Insān, p. 50.

2. RIS, 1:21, 43, 77. On p. 43, it is made clear that the number fifty-two excludes the Comprehensive Epistle. Although the table of contents (al-fihrist) was referred to once as an epistle (RIS, 4:283), it could not be the fifty-second epistle. This is because, in the table of contents itself the number of the epistles is given as fifty-two and a list of all their titles is given which does not include the table of contents.
3. RIS, 1:327, 361; 2:152; 3:29, 75, 408, 538; 4:64, 173, 186, 250, 282, 283, 284, 312. Note that the reference to the number as fifty-one in 3:408 and 4:250 indicates that it excludes the Comprehensive Epistle.
4. RIS, 4:283, 284, 312.
5. The Beirut edition depends on two late Indian MSS, as well as on al-Majrīṭī's early MS. In this edition the number is never referred to as fifty-one, but as fifty-two in five different places. See RJ, 2:298, 422, 537, 539, 540. The Damascus edition, on the other hand, depends on four different MSS (Damascus, Cairo, Tehran and Paris). In this edition, the number is given as fifty-one in some places (2:393, 399, 400) where the Beirut edition gives it as fifty-two.

6. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:5.
7. Al-Mantiqī, Siwān, p. 361.
8. 'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Qiftī, Tārīkh al-Hukamā', ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903), p. 82 (hereafter cited as Tārīkh).
9. Ḥājji Khalīfa [pseud.], Kashf al-Zunūn 'an Asāmi al-Kutub wa al-Funūn [Lexicon Bibliographicum Et Encyclopaedicum], ed. Gustavus Flügel, The Oriental Translation Fund, 7 vols. (Leipzig, 1935-58), 3:460 (hereafter cited as Kashf).
10. Al-Quraishī, 'Uyūn, p. 368; Abū al-Ma'ālī Ḥatim ibn 'Imrān ibn Zuhrah, Risālat al-Uṣul wa al-Ahkām, cited in 'Arif Tāmīr, ed., Khams Rasā'il Ismā'īliyah (Syria: Dār al-Inṣāf, 1956), p. 121 (hereafter cited as Risālat al-Uṣūl; Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad, Fuṣūl wa Akhbār, quoted in Tāmīr, Haqīqat, p. 13.
11. Idrīs 'Imad al-Dīn al-Qurayshī, Zahr al-Ma'ānī, quoted in Tāmīr, Haqīqat, p. 18.
12. See, for example, De Boer, History, p. 83; Lane-Poole, Brotherhood of Purity, p. 25; Awa, L'Esprit, p. 3; al-Disūqī, Ikhwān al-Safā, p. 65. Farrūkh, pointing to the discrepancies in the references to the number, accepts the number as fifty-one without justifying his choice. See 'Umar Farrūkh, Ikhwān al-Safā, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Maktabat Munaiminah, 1953), p. 32.
13. See for example, Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, p. 2; Jamāl al-Dīn, Falsafat al-Tarbiyah, pp. 29-30; Tāmīr, Haqīqat, p. 15. Note that Tāmīr, ignoring the reference to the number as fifty-one in the Epistles themselves, claims that the author of the Epistles, imam 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad, intentionally made the Epistles fifty-two so as to equal the number of the letters that compose his name according to a certain kind of calculation established by the Ismā'īlīs. See Tāmīr, Haqīqat, p. 13.
14. Yūḥannā al-Fakhūrī al-Borollosī, Ikhwān al-Safā: Dars Tahlilī li Falsafathūm Mudhayyal bi Muntajāt min Rasā'ilhūm (Lebanon: Maṭba'at al-



Qiddis Bulis, 1947), p. 7. Note that some scholars even refer to the number of the Epistles as being fifty without giving any explanation for this view. See Gumayr, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', p. 9. See also De Boer, History, p. 83, where he says that the number might be fifty.

15. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, p. 81.
16. Frederik Dieterici, Khulāṣat al-Wafā bi Ikhtisār Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā': Die Abhandlungen der Ichwān es-Safā in Auswahl (Leipzig, 1883).
17. The problem was referred to earlier by Tibawi. He gives a concise description of the nature of the problem and of some of the contradictory references to the number. He also attempts to ascertain their exact number. With Marquet, however, one finds a fuller treatment. See Tibawi, Critical Review, pp. 38-39.
18. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, p. 11; EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," by Yves Marquet, p. 1073.
19. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, p. 14; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1073.
20. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, p. 11; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1073.
21. Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 38, n. 61; Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, p. 2.
22. References to the Comprehensive Epistle come in, RIS, 1:39, 42, 273, 297; 3:408; 4:237, 250, 262, 340, 378. References to the table of contents come in, 3:401; 4:283.
23. Abbas Hamdani, "The Arrangement of the Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the Problem of Interpolations," JSS 29 (Spring 1984):102 (hereafter cited as "Arrangement").
24. Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 38, n. 61. In this connection, it should perhaps be pointed out that a paragraph which occurs in the midst of this epistle and which reads as a closing remark for both the epistle and the work as a whole, makes it highly probable that the part that comes after it

is spurious. See RIS, 4:312. This, however, does not mean that the whole epistle is a late addition. This, in fact, cannot be the case because frequent references to this epistle are encountered throughout the entire work.

25. Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 102.
26. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, p. 11; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1073.
27. RIS, 1:272.
28. Ibid., 1:296. The epistle's introduction denotes that it was written after the eleventh epistle of the second section.
29. RIS, 1:274, where it is mentioned that the science of the hereafter is a branch of the divine sciences. Note also that the epistle, On Resurrection (Fī al-Ba'ṭh wa al-Qiyāmah), is referred to in some places as the epistle of the hereafter (Risālat al-Ma'ād). Check RIS, 1:413.
30. Marquet, Les Ikhwān, p. 11; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1073.
31. RIS, vol. 1, R. 12 (6 pages); R. 11 (10 pages) while R. 5 of the same volume consists of 60 pages; vol. 3, R. 1 (19 pages), R. 3 (9 pages), R. 13 (13 pages), R. 14 (16 pages) while R. 17 of the same volume is 94 pages; vol. 4, R. 2 (8 pages) while R. 1 is 137 pages.
32. The epistle, The Heaven and the Cosmos (al-samā' wa al-ʿālām), the second of the second section, has a chapter about the philosophers' account that the universe is a macrocosm. RIS, 2:24. This is discussed later as the third epistle of the third section. Also the epistle, On Influences from Above (al-āthār al-ʿulwiyah), the fourth of the second section, has a chapter about the quidity of nature. RIS, 2:63. This is again discussed in a separate epistle, the fifth of the second edition. Again the epistle, Intelligibles (al-mabādi' al-ʿaqliyah), the second of the third volume, has a chapter about the gradual creation of the world. RIS, 3:209. This is discussed later in a separate epistle, the tenth of the fourth section.

33. RIS, 2:168.
34. Ibid., 4:278.
35. Ibid., 3:221-30.
36. Ibid., 3:221.
37. RJ, 2:346-63.
38. Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 102.
39. RIS, 4:250.
40. Note that the first reference to the number of the epistles, after the reference that occurs in the first epistle, comes in the ninth epistle. RIS, 1:327.
41. Marquet, "Ismailiens," p. 233.
42. Ibid., p. 234.
43. Ibid.; Marquet, Les Ikhwan, p. 13; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Şafā'," p. 1073.
44. Ibid.; Yves Marquet, "910 en Ifrīqiya: Une Epître des Iḥwān aş Şafā'," BEO Damas 30 (1978):61-73.
45. Yves Marquet, "Note Annexe: A Propos d'un Poème Ismaïlien dans les Epîtres des Iḥwān aş-Şafā'," SI LV (1982):137-42.
46. Marquet, "Ismailiens," p. 234.
47. Marquet, Les Ikhwan, pp. 10-13; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Şafā'," p. 1073.
48. Marquet, Les Ikhwan, pp. 13-14; Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Şafā'," p. 1073.
49. Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 101, 103. Note that Hamdani wrongly refers to these two epistles as being the seventh and eighth.
50. These epistles are: Various (Speculative) Views (fī al-Ārā' wa al-Diyānat); On the Essence of Faith and the Character of True Believers (fī Mahiyat al-Imān wa Khiṣāl al-Mu'minin al-Muḥaqiqin), The Call to God (fī Kayfiyat al-Da'wah ilā Allah); Types of Policy (fī Kayfiyat Anwā' al-Siyāsāt wa

Kamiyatiha); The Overall Order of the Cosmos (fī Kayfiyat Nadud al-‘Ālam); Magic, Spells, the “Eye” (fī Mahiyat al-Sihr wa al-‘Azā’im wa al-‘Ayn).

51. References in the fourth section are to epistle number nine of the first section; epistles two, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve of the second section; and three, five and seven of the third section. See RIS, 4:114, 116, 119, 120, 121, 162, 183, 214, 228, 229, 234.
52. See, for example, RIS, 1:112, 148 (where they refer to the epistle and to a chapter in it in particular), 295, 311, 317, 338, 413, 429.
53. RIS, 4:11, 18, 42, 57, 146, 173, 180.
54. RIS, 4:14-15.
55. RIS, 4:146, 171ff.
56. RIS, 4:251ff.
57. See RIS, 4:138, 144.
58. RIS, 4:145-46.
59. RIS, 4:14-15.
60. RIS, 4:18, 57.
61. RIS, 4:171-76.
62. RIS, 4:42.
63. RIS, 4:167-68.
64. RIS, 4:11.
65. RIS, 4:14-17, 177-79.
66. RIS, 4:180.
67. RIS, 4:129-30.
68. RIS, 1:272.

69. RIS, 2:52, 62, 86, 87, 132, 150, 177.
70. See RIS, 2:19-20. It should be noted here that all the English titles of the Epistles used in the text and the footnotes are from: [Ikhwān al-Ṣafā], The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: A Tenth Century Ecological Fable of the Pure Brethren of Basra, translated with introduction and commentary by Lenn Evan Goodman, Library of Classical Arabic Literature, vol. III, Ilse Lichtenstadter, gen. ed. (U.S.A.: Twayne Publishers, A Division of G.K. Hall & Co., 1978), pp. 45-51 (hereafter cited as The Case).
71. Marquet, Les Ikhwans, p. 12.
72. RIS, 1:266, 267.
73. RIS, 4:9-10.
74. RIS, 2:20.
75. RIS, 1:268-69.
76. RIS, 1:272-73.
77. RIS, 3:457.
78. RIS, 4:284.
79. RIS, 1:429; 3:345, 348. See the seventh epistle, chap. 5, pp. 266-72.
80. RIS, 1:398; 2:420.
81. RIS, 3:199-200.
82. RIS, 1:398, 448; 2:116, 197; 3:19, 31, 56, 93, 238, 278, 359, 460, 472.
83. RIS, 4:244.
84. RIS, 4:284, 287.
85. RIS, 3:459.
86. RIS, 1:353.

87. RIS, 4:125.
88. RIS, 1:273-74.
89. RIS, 1:273-74.
90. See the forty-seventh epistle, the sixth from the fourth section, 4:124-45.
91. RIS, 4:258-59.
92. See the discussion concerning kingship and the succession to the prophets-lawgivers in chapter six of this thesis.
93. RIS, 1:274.
94. RIS, 1:23; RJ, 1:97, 100. Note that in the Comprehensive Epistle, but not in the Epistles themselves, the forty-fifth epistle entitled: The Lifestyle and the Cooperative Methods of the Ikhwān (fī Kayfiyat Mu'āsharat Ikhwān al-Safā' wa Ta'āwūn Ba'dahūm Ma'a Ba'd), is placed as the last epistle. But, most probably, this alteration in its order had been affected by the authors of the Epistles themselves as they state in the beginning of their summary of this epistle that they meant to discuss it after summarizing all the other epistles. See RJ, 2:537.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN STUDYING RASÂ'IL IKHWÂN AL- ŞAFÂ': AUTHORSHIP AND DATING

### I The Problem of Authorship

Of the various problems posed by the Epistles, that of their authorship continues to be the most pressing. Not surprisingly, it is the problem that has received most attention by research scholars and that has also been the subject of most speculation. The eclectic nature of the work combined with the anonymity of its authors nourished the wildest theories in this regard. Thus, we find the Epistles ascribed to a number of authors who held different unreconcilable views and who spanned a period of five centuries. Medieval Islamic scholars, for example, attribute the Epistles to 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib,<sup>1</sup> to Ja'far al-Şādiq,<sup>2</sup> to Jabir Ibn Hayyān,<sup>3</sup> to al-Ḥallāj,<sup>4</sup> to early Mu'tazilite theologians,<sup>5</sup> to named and unnamed Ismā'īlī imāms,<sup>6</sup> to the Nuşairis,<sup>7</sup> to a group of learned men of fourth century Baṣrah,<sup>8</sup> to al-Majrīṭī<sup>9</sup> and to al-Ghazālī.<sup>10</sup> Needless to say that some of these claims are simply too improbable to deserve serious consideration. Others, particularly those which have been re-echoed by some modern authors deserve thorough examination. These include theories that relate the Epistles to Şūfism, to Mu'tazilite theologians, to al-Majrīṭī, to a group of learned men of fourth century Baṣrah and to Ismā'īlism.

#### a. The Theory of Ṣūfī Authorship

Although the attribution of the Epistles to al-Ḥallāj (244-309/857-922) is reported only by al-Ṣafadī,<sup>11</sup> it should be noted that a theory relating the Epistles to the Ṣūfī movement in general does not lack advocates. Thus, for example, the nineteenth century traditional scholar al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī, after mentioning different theories of authorship that ascribe the Epistles to the Qarmatians, to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, to the fourth century group of Baṣrah and to al-Majrīṭī, expresses his conviction, based on his own reading of the text, that the Epistles are of a Ṣūfī nature with a Shīʿī tendency.<sup>12</sup>

Among modern scholars, Nasr is the one who wholeheartedly holds this view. He maintains that the Brethren "identify themselves spiritually with *tasawwuf*."<sup>13</sup> The purpose of the Brethren, according to him, is educational,<sup>14</sup> and their ultimate end is to expound eternal wisdom which he identifies with the *ḥikmah laduniyyah* of Suhrawardī.<sup>15</sup> According to him, the name *Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ* itself is very indicative in this regard. He states that the word "*ṣafāʾ*" is used intensively by the Ṣūfīs "to denote the interior purity which makes gnosis (*maʿrifah*) possible and which is the ultimate aim of *tasawwuf*."<sup>16</sup> On the authority of Abu-Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988), author of *Kitāb al-Lumāʿ*, he states that the Ṣūfī Abu Hasan al-Qannār derived the word "*Ṣūfī*" itself from "*ṣafāʾ*".<sup>17</sup> It is obvious that Nasr believes that the Brethren's Ṣūfism is ultimately Shīʿī, as he holds them to be certainly inspired by Shīʿism.<sup>18</sup> Ṭibāwī agrees with Nasr regarding the significance of the name *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. He observes that it was chosen "as an imitation of the Ṣūfī tendency to associate their name with



ṣafā' (purity)."<sup>19</sup> Although he never specified whether this Ṣūfism is Shī'ī or Sunnī, the indications are that he considered it Shī'ī. This is supported by two later articles in which he explicitly holds that the Brethren are Shī'īs.<sup>20</sup> Netton who approves Ṭibāwī's observation concerning the significance of the name, adds that the term "Lords of the Truths" (arbāb al-haqā'iq) which was used by the Brethren to describe themselves has a Ṣūfī ring to it. Yet, he observes that this is not to say that the Brethren fully embraced Ṣūfism but were rather influenced by it.<sup>21</sup> Diwald also stresses the importance of the word "ṣafā'" in the name of the authors. For her, it indicates the sufistic nature of the work as a whole.<sup>22</sup> She even believes that the esoteric views expressed in the Epistles and which are usually considered to be indicative of an Ismā'īlī identity, could be taken as mystical teachings.<sup>23</sup> Although, like Ṭibāwī, she does not explicitly mention towards which Ṣūfī tendency the Brethren lean, unlike him, it seems that she considers them Sunnī Ṣūfis. In the introduction to her work, she rejects claims of an Ismā'īlī authorship and reveals her conviction that the work in general is of an orthodox nature.<sup>24</sup>

This theory of a Ṣūfī authorship of the Epistles finds some support in the text. The Brethren describe themselves as the pure Ṣūfis (al-Khulaṣā' al-Sūfiyah) in the very first passage of their work.<sup>25</sup> There are also two sections in which Ṣūfī ascetism is treated in some detail. In the first of these sections they praise the ascetics' practices of fasting and humble dressing.<sup>26</sup> In the second section, which is mainly concerned with the different influences of the different musical sounds on different souls, they give examples from the experiences of

people of internal love for the divine (ahl al-wajd) that are steeped in Şūfī terminology.<sup>27</sup>

This evidence, however, is only partial, showing, at best, that there is Şūfī influence, but not that this is the work of authors who were committed Şūfīs. Now, it is true that when defining the ideal man, they refer to him as a Şūfī. This, however, comes as only one of many other attributes.<sup>28</sup> Again, although zuhd in the worldly desires is constantly acclaimed by the Brethren as the upright way that leads to a happy afterlife,<sup>29</sup> they insisted that worshipping God is not fulfilled by praying and fasting alone.<sup>30</sup> In a significant passage that comes in the epistle about the animals, a fierce attack was launched against the Şūfīs and their methods. In this passage the Şūfīs are criticized for isolating themselves from society, for the exaggerated importance they give to outer attire, for devoting themselves completely to prayer and fasting to the detriment of their physical health and for refraining from devoting time to learning. These are the acts -- the criticism goes on -- of people who might appear to be pious, when in fact they possess evil spirits.<sup>31</sup>

This is not to say that the Brethren were not influenced by Şūfī spiritual teachings that direct man away from worldly materialism. The Brethren themselves held that to achieve intellectual perfection one cannot be too preoccupied with the physical needs of the body. This would leave one neither time nor energy to fulfill his soul's moral and intellectual needs.<sup>32</sup> It is, thus, that despite this severe criticism of Şūfism, the Brethren can still describe the ideal man as a Şūfī.

It is, however, the extreme form of Ṣūfī ascetism that the Brethren object to. Their objection requires further elaboration. Extreme ascetism violates two contents principal to the Brethren's philosophy. There is, first of all, harm to the body which the Brethren maintain to be the tool of the soul, a tool it requires to attain knowledge and hence perfection.<sup>33</sup> Then, there is the isolation of the ascetic. This isolation is again contrary to the Brethren's attitude towards knowledge. Knowledge depends on the cooperative endeavour of scholars past and present.<sup>34</sup> Hence, the wise man, for them, is the one who benefits from life without being seduced by it.<sup>35</sup>

To conclude, Ṣūfī influence is certainly found in the Epistles. But as Netton rightly observes in pointing this out, this does not mean that they were themselves Ṣūfīs.

#### b. The Theory of Mu'tazilite Authorship

Al-Qifṭī in his account of the Epistles mentions a view current in his time, attributing them to early Mu'tazilite theologians.<sup>36</sup> Although al-Qifṭī never elaborated on this theory and apparently did not take it seriously,<sup>37</sup> a number of modern scholars embraced it. E.G. Browne, emphasizing the rationalistic tendencies of the Brethren, considered them Mu'tazilites.<sup>38</sup> M.A. Palacios, and in more recent times M. Fakhry, advocate the Mu'tazilite nature of the Epistles, yet stress the Shī'ite impact on the work as a whole.<sup>39</sup> A. Awa, more than any of the modern scholars, declares his wholehearted support for the claim that the Brethren are followers of the Mu'tazilite school. After examining all the

theories advanced concerning the authorship of the Epistles, he concludes that its Muʿtazilite nature is unmistakable. He, thus, asserts the relation between the Epistles and the Muʿtazilite movement of Baṣrah in the mid-tenth century. But, as he observes, since Muʿtazilism was no longer the dominant school of kalam in the Abbasid epoch in which the Epistles appeared, he maintains that it is best to refer to the Brethren as the post-Muʿtazilite school.<sup>40</sup>

Many modern scholars, however, completely reject this view. S.M. Stern declared it to be "singularly inappropriate."<sup>41</sup> He, together with L.E. Goodman, believes that this is the case because of the violent aversion displayed by the Brethren against Mutakkalimūn in general.<sup>42</sup> Nasr rejects it on the basis that the rationality of the Muʿtazilites is in striking opposition to the cosmological and metaphysical views of the Brethren.<sup>43</sup> Fakhry, despite his belief in the Muʿtazilite nature of the Epistles, finds the Brethren's acceptance of the Muʿtazilite doctrine of free will perplexing since it contradicts their astronomical belief in the power of the stars and their determination of the worldly happenings.<sup>44</sup> For Hijāb, this thesis is the hardest to accept, not only because the Brethren bitterly reject kalām in general, but because they display a distaste for Muʿtazilism in particular. Consequently, he argues, the title "People of Justice" which is sometimes used by the Brethren to describe themselves, cannot act as an indication of the relation between the Brethren and the Muʿtazilites.<sup>45</sup> This is in complete contrast to Netton's opinion. He thinks that "People of Justice" could be an official title by which the Brethren liked to be known. Since the Muʿtazilites are known as "People of Justice and Unity," Netton believes that

this strongly suggests the influence of the Mu'tazilite doctrine on the Brethren's thought.<sup>46</sup>

Admittedly, the ambiguity of the Epistles when discussing theological issues poses difficulties in determining which of these two views is the correct one. A careful probing of those passages where the Brethren discuss Mu'tazilite beliefs, however, yields, as we shall try to show, a definite answer to this question.

It is true that the Mu'tazilite are referred to by name only once in the whole text.<sup>47</sup> But doctrines that are specifically Mu'tazilite are discussed throughout the Epistles. What then are these doctrines? The Mu'tazilites, whether of the Baghdād or the Baṣrah groups, agree in upholding five principles, namely the principles of divine justice, of divine unity, of the promise and threat, of the intermediate position and of the obligation of commanding what is right and forbidding the wrong.<sup>48</sup> Of these, the two cardinal principles are those of divine justice and divine unity. This is not only generally acknowledged, but something which the Mu'tazilites themselves maintained, as evidenced by their referring to themselves as "the people of justice and unity" (ahl al-'adl wa al-tawhid).<sup>49</sup> It is hence not surprising to find that the Mu'tazilite issues debated by the Brethren centred mainly around these two doctrines and their implications.

To turn first to the principle of divine justice, it involves the question of free will and predestination. It inevitably raises the question of the relation of a good and just God to the existence of evil in the world and to the question of reward and punishment in the hereafter. If God is just, does He then reward and punish man for those acts which he is compelled to do or which are beyond

his capacity to do? The general Mu'tazilite answer is in the negative. Thus al-Shahrastānī reports that all the Mu'tazilites agree that as long as God imposes duties on men and tries them for neglecting them, man must have the capacity or power (al-qudrah) to perform or refrain from performing such duties.<sup>50</sup> Watt formulates this belief in the statement "taklif implies qudrah."<sup>51</sup> Unlike their opponents, particularly the Ash'arites, who assigned to man a power to act but held that this power is (a) created by God at the time of the act and (b) that it is a power to do only one particular act, the Mu'tazilites in general believed that this power exists before the act and is a power to do either the act or its opposite. In other words, this power does not necessitate the act.<sup>52</sup> Man, thus, has the freedom to choose and is the author of those acts for which he is held responsible. This rigorous vindication of man's free will obviously stemmed from the Mu'tazilite conviction that God would be unjust if He punishes man for acts that He preordains and on which man has no power.<sup>53</sup>

This issue of free will and predestination is the focus of more than one lengthy passage in the Epistles. Under the heading "Chapter concerning Predestination,"<sup>54</sup> they expounded the general outline of the dispute between the two groups: the Jabriyyah, that is, those who held that all human acts are predestined, and the Qadariyyah who upheld the freedom of will. But when they proceeded to give their own opinion, we encounter ambiguity, in fact, inconsistency. Although they hold, with the Mu'tazilite opponents, that the power to act is created in man by God and that no one can do any act unless God gives him the power and the strength for the deed and facilitates it for him, they proceed

to say, with the Mu‘tazilites, that this intercession from God does not impose on man either action or inaction. This is because this power created in man by God can be used either in doing the act or in discarding it. Hence, free will is safeguarded in a Mu‘tazilite fashion. But they then introduced an element which is quite alien to this Mu‘tazilite tenet. A determining factor in man's choice whether to use this power to do the act or not to do it consists of a number of causes over which man has practically no power. Examples of these are his psychological disposition, his ethical norms, his financial and sociological status, all of which are determined, according to the Brethren, by the power of the stars.<sup>55</sup> Thus, by one stroke their vindication of free will is reduced to complete predestination. Indeed, they closed this passage by ascertaining that all men's deeds are foreknown to God.<sup>56</sup> For them, God's foreknowledge of an act means that it is preordained.

The issue becomes crystalized in their answer to an objection that relates to the principle of order and prohibition and of promise and threat. The objection is to the effect that if God has foreknowledge of all events what is the rationale of the principle of order and prohibition, promise and threat? In answering this, the Brethren reaffirm that (a) God has foreknowledge of all deeds, good and evil, and, as such, that (b) all these deeds must happen. Reward and punishment, however, do not follow from the occurrence or non-occurrence of these deeds. But they are due to man's negligence of exercising an endeavour to either perform the order or to refrain from the prohibition regardless of the fact that the act will happen.<sup>57</sup> Needless to say that this answer does not resolve this difficulty.

For one thing, God's foreknowledge of man's endeavour means that this endeavour is pre-ordained too. But even if one sets this objection aside, there is the further dilemma of having to maintain that God is responsible for the evil in this world. Their position on evil is irreconcilable with the Mu'tazilite tenets.

The Brethren's discussion of this issue begins with the classification of good and evil into four categories: the first consists of good and ill-fortune due to astral events; the second category belongs to the natural course of generation and corruption; the third to the animal instincts of attraction and repulsion, love and hate; and the fourth relates to what happens to human souls under obligation (al-taklīf) in terms of their fortune in this world and the next.<sup>58</sup> In their discussion of the reasons of the first three categories of good and evil they ultimately attribute them to God.<sup>59</sup> But while good is the outcome of divine providence and design, evil comes about through Him incidentally. This they call "second intention" (al-qasḍ al-thānī) as contrasting the "first intention" (al-qasḍ al-awwal) or the good. Although they identify "the first intention" as what proceeds directly from God's ibdā' and is thus perfect (kamil), eternal (bāqī) and integral (tām) and "the second intention" as what results from the deficiency of matter itself and its inability to perform in a better way,<sup>60</sup> we have to be aware that they insist that the deficiency of matter is a sign of divine wisdom and providence.<sup>61</sup>

When they come to discuss the fourth category of good and evil which relates to the human souls under obligation, they divide it into two sub-categories: one relates to the good and evil things man acquires through his acts; the other



are the rewards and punishments in the hereafter.<sup>62</sup> (Most probably since the question of reward and punishment in the hereafter is discussed by the Brethren elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> they confine their attention here to the first sub-category.) They divide the good and evil acquired by humans into five kinds: that which relates to knowledge and sciences, that which relates to merits and norms, that which relates to beliefs and opinions, that which relates to speech and that which relates to acts and deeds. They believe that the judgment on any of these kinds as to whether they are good or evil is either rational ('aqli) or conventional (wad'i).<sup>64</sup> This brings us to the Mu'tazilite belief in the objectivity of good and evil, more precisely, the doctrine that certain acts have objective qualities of goodness (al-husn) and badness (al-qubh) which reason can discern independently of revelation. In other words, moral good and evil are objective and rationally discernable. This is in sharp contrast with the traditionalists' views that the validity of good and evil is rooted in the scripture and needs a divine source to establish the moral distinction between them.<sup>65</sup> Although the Brethren seem to believe in the validity of both ways, a thorough reading of their words betrays a preference of the subjectivity of good and evil. It is true they seem to accept a rational way for arriving at good and evil and that in a sense these values can be regarded as objective. But they give no rationale for this. Thus, while for the Mu'tazilites the basis for their objective view is the theory that goodness and badness are qualities of acts, there is not the slightest allusion to this specifically Mu'tazilite doctrine in the Brethren's discussion. Moreover, although they speak of a rational way of arriving at good and evil, they insist that man cannot utilize this tool unless his soul is purified and elevated to a high

rank of knowledge and good manners. This, in its turn, necessitates man's need for a teacher. But the teachers that all mankind need are the authors of the divine law and the teachers of these are the angels and the teacher of the angels is the universal soul and the teacher of the universal soul is the active intellect and the teacher of all is God.<sup>66</sup> Thus, even when the Brethren are speaking of a rational way of recognizing good and evil, they insist almost in the same breath that this supposedly unaided way depends in the end on the aid of God through his messengers, that is, on revelation. This contention makes us expect that their position towards the issue of promise and threat would differ drastically from that of the Mu'tazilites.

From the objectivity of good and evil as a major premise, the Mu'tazilites proceed to argue the inevitability of God's promises and threats. This is based on their belief that it is impossible for God to act in total disregard, not only of His own words, but also of pure reason in so far as this would comprise His wisdom as much as it would comprise His justice.<sup>67</sup> The Brethren seem to agree with the Mu'tazilites that God is bound to carry out his promises of reward, but, with regard to His threats of punishment, He can always reverse them without being a liar. The liar, according to them, is the one who says that he did something while he did not do it, or who says that he did not do something while he did it. But for one to say that he will do something, then refrain from doing it, he will simply be one who fails to carry out what he said he will do. To refrain from carrying out a promise is blameworthy, but to refrain from carrying out a threat, this is praiseworthy, and in God's case it is a sign of His mercy.<sup>68</sup>

This stand helps clarify the Brethren's brief attack on those who believe that God created men in order to benefit them while at the same time hold that He will punish the sinner eternally.<sup>69</sup> This is clearly an explicit rejection of one of the basic Mu'tazilite beliefs, namely that the unrepentant sinner is eternally punished.

Related to the issue of man's capacity to act freely and that of the relation of God to evil in this world, is the question of who is responsible for the deeds that are generated by man's initial act, especially if these generated deeds are evil.<sup>70</sup> The Mu'tazilites offer different answers to this question. Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 210/825) and Abu al-Hudhail al-'Allāf (d. 227/841), with certain qualifications, held that man is responsible for the consequences of his deeds introducing the doctrine of tawwalud.<sup>71</sup> Others, like Thumāmah ibn al-Ashras (d. 213/828), are said to have held that the generated effects of man's willed action have no author.<sup>72</sup> Mu'ammār ibn 'Abbād (contemporary of al-Nazzām), on the other hand, followed by Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. ca. 220-231/835-845), asserts that what generates from man's deeds should be ascribed to nature.<sup>73</sup> Although the Brethren reject all these theories, the solution they provide comes very close to the latter's theory. Mu'ammār holds that God is responsible for the existence of bodies but not for accidents which are to be ascribed to the action of the bodies themselves. The action of the bodies exists either by virtue of their nature (ṭab'ān) or as a result of a voluntary choice (ikhtiārān).<sup>74</sup> Al-Nazzām accepts the notion of the inherent nature as the decisive factor of the activities of things. He adds the concept of kumūn, i.e. God's initial creation of the latent

properties of things which are subsequently manifested externally (zuhūr).<sup>75</sup> As Fakhry rightly observes, the motive of Mu‘ammar and al-Nazzām in following these notions of ṭab‘, zuhūr and kumūn is first to relieve God of any responsibility for evil in the world and secondly to relieve Him from the task of continuous intervention in the events of this world but without sacrificing his sovereignty. This they guaranteed by referring every activity in the world indirectly to God and directly to a secondary natural agent.<sup>76</sup>

This second motive seems to be particularly appealing to the Brethren. God, they argued, created the agents but not their deeds. The only manner in which their deeds are to be attributed to God is metaphorically as when one attributes the building of a city to a king. This act is attributed to the king because he willed it and ordered it to happen. But it is obvious that he does not indulge directly in performing it. With the same analogy, they go on, God is too exalted to be directly involved in the course of worldly events. God wills and His agents do the act He willed. Whether these acts are brought about by natural necessity or voluntarily, their relation to God is figurative.<sup>77</sup> Thus, like Mu‘ammar and al-Nazzām, the Brethren were trying to maintain God's sovereignty over all worldly events, yet in an indirect manner that would preserve His sublimity. However, they still depart from them on two issues. The first is that the Brethren continued to advocate the absolute omnipotence of God by maintaining His ultimate responsibility for both good and evil alike. The second is that they identify "nature" with one of God's angels that acts upon His will and on His behalf.<sup>78</sup> On this premise they reject the attempts of a group of dialecticians (obviously

the Mu'tazilites) to attribute such evils as the death of children and the sufferings of beasts to God and to explain them by such notions as al-lutf, al-aslah, al-mukāfa'ah and al-mujāzā.<sup>79</sup> For the Brethren, the starting point of these mutakalimūn is wrong. The Brethren argue that such acts should not be attributed to God but to nature.<sup>80</sup> But again taking into account the Brethren's assertion that nature is an angel that acts on God's commands, and that it is a power (quwwah) of the universal soul that diffuses itself in the individual souls,<sup>81</sup> it becomes obvious that all their theories concerning man's capacity to act freely are but a modified version of determinism.

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The second cardinal doctrine of the Mu'tazilites is that of divine unity (al-tawhīd). The main concern of the Mu'tazilites was to safeguard the concept of the utter oneness of the divine essence and to deny any multiplicity or plurality in the divine nature -- hence, their attempt to interpret the divine essential attributes either as identical with the divine essence or else as not being anything positive, attached, as it were, to the divine essence. Two other issues were also raised by the Mu'tazilites in connection with their principle of divine unity. One was their rejection of anthropomorphism and corporealism. God is utterly other than his creatures. This otherness manifests itself in his utter unity. His creation partakes of plurality. Man and all corporeal beings partake of plurality. God is hence totally other than man and totally other than any corporeal being. Another consequence of their doctrine of unity and hence of the attributes as

positive characteristics separate from the essence was their dogma that the Qur'ān, the speech of God, is not an eternal positive attribute, but that it is created. Although the Epistles betray the Brethren's full awareness of the controversies in medieval Islam on these issues, they generally refrain from making clear, explicit statements that commit them to a definite position. In this they are less positive than in their discussions of the question of divine justice.<sup>82</sup>

The Brethren certainly recognize the controversial nature of the problem of the relation of the divine essence to the divine attributes. After presenting a variety of views concerning the essence of God which involve corporealism and anthropomorphism, they declare that the best view is that which comprehends God neither as an individual nor as a spiritual image nor as one light, but as unique haecceity (huwiyah waḥdāniyyah), possessing one power but different acts. None of God's creatures know what He is or who He is. He is the being who exists in all things without being part of any.<sup>83</sup> In another significant passage, they declare that the difficulty which faces those who investigate the question of God's essence and attributes lies in the fact that they conduct their research using the same methods used in determining the essence and attributes of the created entities.<sup>84</sup> This, with their definition of God's essence, shows their belief, like the Mu'tazilites, in the otherness and transcendence of God (but this is also a Neoplatonic doctrine common to Islamic philosophy). However, it seems that they did not go all the way with the Mu'tazilites whose belief in the utter unity of God makes them reject all aspects of corporealism and anthropomorphism alike.<sup>85</sup> The Mu'tazilah, in dealing with the anthropomorphic and corporealistic

verses in the Qur'ān, resorted to allegorical interpretation (ta'wīl). This was exactly what the Brethren advocate for verses like the sitting of God upon the throne, the possibility of seeing Him as a body in the hereafter and those speaking of Him as seeing, hearing and moving.<sup>86</sup> Allegorical interpretation is necessary in all these cases which, for them, give a bodily form for God. But one should notice that what the Brethren are attacking here are the beliefs of the corporealists. As for the beliefs of the anthropomorphists who, taking the Qur'ānic verses in their literal sense predicated a group of positive attributes, akin to human qualities, to God, nothing clear is offered in the Epistles. The Brethren expounded the theories shared by some of the Mu'tazilites and Neoplatonic philosophers concerning the attributes of God being identical with His essence, as well as the moderate traditionists' theories asserting a number of eternal attributes that are added to His essence.<sup>87</sup> However, they never explicitly give their own opinion, stating to which party they adhere. Nevertheless, one would say that they are close to the view of the Mu'tazilite 'Abbād b. Sulaymān (d. 250/864), who questioned the legitimacy of discussing this issue of attributes altogether. For him, it is equally wrong to say that God has power or knowledge or that He does not.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the Brethren deem it inappropriate to question anything about God beside His existence and His essence.<sup>89</sup> 'Abbād ibn Sulayman, it has to be noted, is not the typical Mu'tazilite.

As for the problem of the createdness of the Qur'ān, they again started by listing the different opposing views.<sup>90</sup> One is that which states that the Qur'ān is created on the basis that, although it is a divine speech, it consists

of audible sounds. This is al-Nazzām's view. The second is a more traditional view which holds that words are but tools and that speech is an expression of the mind of the speaker. On this basis, the Qur'ān is uncreated because God eternally knows these meanings and as long as his knowledge is uncreated then the Qur'ān is uncreated. Then they moved to a third theory, an extension of a theory usually attributed to Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir, which holds that what is really meant by speech is that the speaker makes the others understand a certain meaning regardless of the language, the words or the tokens he uses. On this basis, God's speech to Gabriel is nothing more than making Gabriel understand the expressions of God's mind and the same goes on from Gabriel to Muḥammad and from Muḥammad to the community and finally among the people of the community themselves. All these aspects are created. Their answer is given only with regard to this last theory. However, they discussed only the first phase of this theory, namely, the instruction of God to Gabriel. They insisted that this phase is uncreated because God's instruction (ifhām) is ibdā' and not creation (khalq). For them, ibdā' is ex-nihilo while khalq is from something. God's speech, they go on, is an ibdā' which God used in creation. They describe creation as God's saying to a thing "Be" and it is. For them, "Be" is uncreated.<sup>91</sup> It has to be noted that this same argument which uses the premise that God's word "Be" cannot be created, is used by al-Ash'arī to prove the uncreatedness of the Qur'ān.<sup>92</sup>

From this presentation of the Brethren's opinions concerning the doctrines of God's justice and unity, it becomes obvious that the claim that they are



Mu‘tazilites is unsubstantiated. Their insistence on the uncreatedness of the Qur’ān, on God’s responsibility for good and evil alike, and on His predetermination of all worldly events are certainly non-Mu‘tazilite. This is not to say that there is no Mu‘tazilite influence on the Brethren’s thought. We detect this, for example, in their attempt to strike a balance between God’s omnipotence and His justice. We also detect it in their insistence that despite the predetermination of worldly events man still has free will. Regardless of whether their arguments are convincing or not, what is important is that they tried not to sacrifice man’s capacity to act freely in order to guarantee God’s omnipotence. Very indicative also is their attempt to offer an explanation for their belief in God’s responsibility of evil, an attempt that was meant to safeguard, not only God’s omnipotence, but His justice as well.

This insistence on God’s justice is no doubt the reason why they sometimes add the title “People of Justice” to their name. The adoption of this title suggests a Mu‘tazilite influence. It does not, however, render them members of this school of kalam.

#### c. The Theory that Attributes the Epistles to al-Majrīṭī

The theory that ascribes the Epistles to the Spanish mathematician and astronomer Maslamah ibn Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī (d. ca. 399/1008) is a relatively late one. As far as it is known, the first to attribute the Epistles to al-Majrīṭī was Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1448). His claim was later reproduced by al-Muftī al-Baḥā’ī (d. 1064/1653).<sup>93</sup> When giving his legal opinion (fatwah) about the

legitimacy of reading the Epistles, he quoted Ibn Hajar's report concerning al-Majrīṭī's authorship *ad verbum*. However, his skepticism concerning the reliability of this attribution becomes apparent when he comments that he does not know who this al-Majrīṭī is.<sup>94</sup> This skepticism is further stressed when he includes the other theory that relates the Epistles to the group of Baṣrah.<sup>95</sup> Hājjī Khalīfah retained the attribution of the Epistles to al-Majrīṭī but in a different manner. He gives two entries in his lexicon Kashf al-Zunūn to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Under the first, he attributes the authorship to the group of learned men of fourth century Baṣrah.<sup>96</sup> The second entry gives only al-Majrīṭī as the author. However, Hājjī Khalīfah insists that these epistles differ from the epistles of the first group, although they are modelled on them.<sup>97</sup> The last of the early sources that mention this theory is al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī (d. after 1298 H.). Depending on Hājjī Khalīfah, Ibn Hajar and a work by a certain al-Safarīnī entitled 'Aqīdat al-Safarīnī, he reproduced not only the theory that names al-Majrīṭī, but also other theories. Al-Alūsī, however, maintains that he himself relates the Epistles to sufism as mentioned earlier.<sup>98</sup>

None of the above reports, with the exception of that of Ibn Hajar asserts as a certainty that al-Majrīṭī is the author of the Epistles. It should be added that Ibn Hajar did not give the authority on which he based this assertion. This is probably the reason why hardly any of the modern scholars attribute the epistles to al-Majrīṭī.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, many modern scholars have attempted to find an explanation for this attribution, particularly since some of the late manuscripts of both the Epistles and the Comprehensive Epistle bear the name

of al-Majrīṭī as their author.<sup>100</sup> A. Zakī, H. Hamdani, Stern and Hijāb suggest that this claim grew out of the tradition that attributes a book on alchemy entitled "Rutbat al-Hakīm" to al-Majrīṭī. In the introduction of this book the author refers in a mysterious way to some epistles that he composed.<sup>101</sup> Although no title was specifically mentioned by the author, it was believed that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity were the ones alluded to in his introduction. Thus, the epistles of the Brethren were consequently attributed to the author of Rutbat al-Hakīm, that is, to al-Majrīṭī. Although Zakī and Hijāb, like Hamdani and Stern, insisted on the invalidity of this claim, their reasons differ. Hamdani and Stern maintain that Rutbat al-Hakīm is apocryphal and is written at least half a century after al-Majrīṭī died.<sup>102</sup> Zakī, on the other hand, reasons that Rutbat al-Hakīm is authentic, yet al-Majrīṭī was not alluding in his introduction to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity but to some other epistles which he wrote anonymously.<sup>103</sup> Hijāb, with Zakī, does not question the authenticity of Rutbat al-Hakīm; yet he believes that what comes in its introduction does not constitute a definite evidence that al-Majrīṭī is the author of the Epistles. Most probably reflecting on Hājji Khalīfah's report, Hijāb states that al-Majrīṭī wrote an epistle following the model of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. However, he made it clear that this epistle is not the Comprehensive Epistle either.<sup>104</sup>

The second entry of Hājji Khalīfah which attributes the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity to al-Majrīṭī seems to have been the background to the assumption of some scholars that al-Majrīṭī is the author of the Comprehensive Epistle. Indeed Brockelmann included the Comprehensive Epistle among the works

of al-Majrīṭī.<sup>105</sup> Stern suggests that this could have been based on the fact that the incipit given by Ḥājjī Khalīfah in his second entry is the same as the incipit of the Comprehensive Epistle.<sup>106</sup> ʿU. al-Disūqī also insists that the Comprehensive Epistle we have now is the work of al-Majrīṭī. He maintains that it is a commentary and an exposition of the epistles which al-Majrīṭī dictated on his students. The background for his claim is the manuscript no. 41 (*hikmah*) in the Egyptian National Library which states that "this is a book that contains the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Friends of Loyalty that can be described as the Comprehensive Epistle of useful benefits by al-Majrīṭī." He argues that this manuscript, which is a series of epistles parallel to the Epistles of the Brethren, is written by al-Majrīṭī who entitled it the Comprehensive Epistle because he was tempted by the frequent references in the Brethren's epistles to a comprehensive epistle that will make explicit what is implicit in the main text. According to al-Disūqī, al-Majrīṭī must have composed a book based on the lectures he gave to his students and claimed that it is the Comprehensive Epistle alluded to in the Epistles of the Brethren.<sup>107</sup>

K. al-Jirr and H. al-Fakhūrī hold an opinion close to that of al-Disūqī. Depending on the tradition that al-Majrīṭī made the customary trip to the east and returned to Spain with an edition of the authentic Comprehensive Epistle of the Brethren, they claim that al-Majrīṭī dictated this Comprehensive Epistle on his students in the form of lectures, apparently without making it clear that it was not his work. Because the Comprehensive Epistle is an exposition of the Epistles, the tradition emerged that al-Majrīṭī is the author of the main text

too.<sup>108</sup>

It should be noted that none of these authors who ascribe the Comprehensive Epistle to al-Majrīṭī give the sources for their farfetched theory. It is true that E. Wiedemann and H. Hamdanī, on the authority of Abu al-Khayr mentioned by P. de Gayangos, maintain that al-Majrīṭī introduced the Epistles to Spain. But they hold that his role ended here.<sup>109</sup> Ṭibāwī, accepting de Gayangos statement, suggests that al-Majrīṭī may have claimed the authorship of the Epistles after bringing a copy of them from the east.<sup>110</sup> However, Stern questions the authenticity of the tradition concerning al-Majrīṭī's role in introducing the Epistles to Spain. He observes that de Gayangos is the only authority on which all modern authors build their claim. But, he goes on, the printed edition of the manuscript of Abu al-Khayr's fihrist which is mentioned by de Gayangos as his source contains neither a reference to al-Majrīṭī nor even to the Brethren's Epistles.<sup>111</sup>

One has to add that none of the early reliable sources who gave the biography of al-Majrīṭī ever related him in any way to the Epistles.<sup>112</sup> Ibn Khaldūn (d. 809/1406), for example, speaks in more than one place of his Muqqadimah about al-Majrīṭī's skills, knowledge and books, but the Epistles were never referred to.<sup>113</sup> Even the role of importing the Epistles to Spain was attributed by these biographers not to al-Majrīṭī but to his student al-Kirmānī (d. 458/1065). Al-Andalusī, in particular, made it quite clear that the Epistles were not known in Spain before al-Kirmānī.<sup>114</sup> Thus, taking into account contemporary historical evidence, it is highly unlikely that al-Majrīṭī was the author of the Epistles.

If we add to this what was previously mentioned about the great resemblance between the Epistles and the Comprehensive Epistle with regard to literary style and ideas and the fact that they are the product of the same authorship, it becomes clear that al-Majrīṭī could not be the author of the Comprehensive Epistle either. The fact that the incipit given by Ḥājjī Khalīfah in his second entry is the same incipit used in the Comprehensive Epistle most probably means, as Stern observes, that Ḥājjī Khalīfah was examining a manuscript of the Comprehensive Epistle that carried al-Majrīṭī's name when he was writing the entry.<sup>115</sup> But the existence of a manuscript that went under al-Majrīṭī's name does not prove that he is actually the author of the work. It rather shows that the unfounded tradition which attributes the Epistles or the Comprehensive Epistle to al-Majrīṭī found its way into late manuscripts of both works.

In this regard one should not minimize the importance of the fact that the Epistles were widely known in the eastern part of the Islamic empire in the seventies of the fourth/the eighties of the tenth century, while they did not come to be known in the Islamic west until the first half of the fifth/eleventh century. If the Epistles were the product of a Western Islamic mind who died towards the end of the fourth/tenth century, one would expect them to be known in the Islamic west much earlier and, moreover, before they were known in the east. The frequent reference in the Epistles to the eastern provinces, especially to Iraq and Iran, and the absence of any reference to the western provinces of the Islamic empire is itself very telling.<sup>116</sup> One should also take into consideration the fact that although there are occasional lapses into the first

person singular in the work,<sup>117</sup> it is almost agreed upon that the Epistles are the outcome of the collective effort of a number of thinkers. Although the intellectual interests of al-Majriṭī, with regard to mathematics and astronomy, are close to some aspects of the Epistles, the historical evidence, as well as the whole message of the Epistles themselves, leaves this claim devoid of any real meaning.

d. The Theory Relating the Epistles to a Group of Learned Men of Fourth/Tenth Century Baṣrah

As early as the seventies of the fourth century/the eighties of the tenth century a theory emerged that attributed the Epistles to a contemporary group of learned men who lived in Baṣrah.<sup>118</sup> For this theory, we are indebted to the famous man of letters Abu-Ḥayyān al-Tawḥidī. During the vizirate of Ibn Saʿdān (373-75/983-85), the vizir of the Buwaihid prince Ṣamṣām al-Dawlah (372-76/983-87), al-Tawḥidī became the vizir's conversation partner (nadīm) for forty nights. He recorded his conversations with Ibn Saʿdān in his book al-Imtāʿ wa al-Muʿānasah.<sup>119</sup> One night the vizir asked him about the doctrinal affiliations of the renowned man of letters and secretary Zayd ibn Rifāʿah.<sup>120</sup> From his answer to the vizir's question, we learn that Zayd frequented in Baṣrah a group known as the Brethren of Purity and served them for some time. For the first time in the early sources individuals were named as being the Brethren responsible for the authorship of the Epistles. Al-Tawḥidī gives the following names as some of the Brethren who collaborated in the composition of the Epistles: Abu-Sulaymān Muḥammad ibn Maʿshar al-Biṣṭī (or al-Buṣṭī), known as al-Maqdisī (or al-

Muqqaddasī); Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ḥārūn al-Zanjānī; Abu-Aḥmad al-Mihrajānī; and al-‘Awqī.<sup>121</sup>

A contemporary report by al-Tawḥidī's teacher, the philosopher Abu Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī al-Sijistanī is closely related. In his book Siwān al-Hikmah, al-Manṭiqī, in an entry about al-Maqdisī, one of the individuals mentioned by al-Tawḥidī, relates the Epistles to him.<sup>122</sup>

Outside the Ismā‘īlī circle, no theory reporting the authorship of the Epistles has gained as wide an acceptance as the one based on al-Tawḥidī's report. This theory has been repeatedly reproduced. Thus al-Baihaqī (499-565/1105-1169) reproduced al-Tawḥidī's report, repeating the same names given by him, but including Zayd ibn Rifā‘ah as one of the authors. Al-Baihaqī, as M. Kurd ‘Alī suggests, in an attempt to reconcile the information given by al-Tawḥidī, who attributed the epistles to several authors, with that given by al-Manṭiqī, who related them to al-Maqdisī, made al-Maqdisī responsible for the wording of the text that was composed by the individuals mentioned by al-Tawḥidī.<sup>123</sup> Al-Qiftī (568-642/1172-1244) in his book Tārikh al-Hukamā’ quotes al-Tawḥidī's report at great length.<sup>124</sup> Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. ca. 750/1350) gives an entry about the Epistles for which he depends on a fifth century account. He relates, on the authority of the Qur’ān reciter Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Khalaf ibn Dhū al-Nūn (d. 478/1085), who in his turn relies on a chain of authorities, that al-Maqdisī is the author of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Dhū al-Nūn added that despite the fact that al-Maqdisī concealed his name, his responsibility for the authorship of the Epistles was never disputed among the Iraqis.<sup>125</sup> Al-Shahrazūri,



the eighth/fourteenth century scholar, gives the same list of names given by al-Tawḥidī, but in a corrupt form. He attempted something similar to al-Baihaqī's suggestion by making al-Maqdisī the spokesman of the committee of authors named by al-Tawḥidī.<sup>126</sup> Ḥājjī Khalifah, as mentioned earlier, gave in his lexicon two entries, one ascribing the Epistles to al-Majriṭī. In the second entry, however, he ascribed the Epistles to the group mentioned by al-Tawḥidī. As with al-Baihaqī, Ḥājjī Khalifah included Zayd ibn Rifā'ah as one of the Brethren.<sup>127</sup>

Despite the directness of this textual evidence, a long line of modern scholars reject it fiercely. These are mainly Ismā'īlī scholars who attribute the Epistles to one of the hidden Ismā'īlī Imāms or some of their chief Dā'īs. H. Hamdani, writing at a time when al-Imtā' was still in the form of a manuscript, commented only on al-Qiftī who quotes at length from al-Imtā'. H. Hamdani argues that because al-Qiftī mentions in his report the existence of schools that attributed the authorship to an 'Alid imām, this means that al-Qiftī does not definitely accept al-Tawḥidī's report. In addition to this, he claims that al-Qiftī doubted the validity of al-Tawḥidī's report and acknowledges "the prevalence of the belief that the Rasā'il were written by 'Alid Imām."<sup>128</sup> A thorough examination of al-Qiftī's report renders these claims unwarranted. It is true that al-Qiftī did not state explicitly that he accepted al-Tawḥidī's account. But the structure of his report points sharply in this direction. He begins his report by saying that "because the authors of the Rasā'il concealed their names, there is a diversity of opinion as to who compiled the Rasā'il."<sup>129</sup> He then mentions the different opinions current during his time. One of these, and not the prevailing one as

Hamdani claims, is the Shi'i theory that believes in an imami authorship in the line of 'Ali; it should be noted that al-Qifti makes no reference to the Ismā'ilis in particular. Al-Qifti then mentions the opinion that attributes the Epistles to early Mu'tazilite theologians. Now, al-Qifti describes these schools by saying that each "propounded its own theory on the basis of estimation and conjecture."<sup>130</sup> It is quite clear that al-Qifti is expressing skepticism regarding these two theories in particular, not that of al-Tawhidi. For after reporting these two theories, he stated that he spent time and effort exploring the sources until he discovered al-Tawhidi's report. If the Shi'i and Mu'tazilite theories were generally accepted during his time, he would not have gone out of his way to search for another attribution especially since al-Tawhidi's report was not publicly known at this time. Unlike his treatment of the other two theories, he gave a lengthy reproduction of al-Tawhidi's report, almost quoting it directly. This indicates quite strongly that even if he did not explicitly express his acceptance of al-Tawhidi's report, he definitely believed that it provided evidence that outweighed the other theories.

Tamir and Ghalib reject al-Tawhidi's report, observing without further discussion that nothing can guarantee its validity.<sup>131</sup> Awa, adopting the same view, maintains that the sources are silent regarding the personalities involved in al-Tawhidi's report with the exception of Zayd b. Rifā'ah.<sup>132</sup> But Awa's claim is inaccurate. Biographies about the four persons named by al-Tawhidi do exist in early sources.

Al-Maqdisi appears in al-Mantiqi's biographical lexicon on philosophers as a contemporary philosopher.<sup>133</sup> Hijab draws attention to a biography of Abu-Sulaymān al-Khaṭābī al-Buṣṭī which appears in al-Subki's Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyah al-Kubrah. This Abu-Sulaymān is treated with great respect and al-Subki gives several reports narrated on his authority. Although we cannot say for certain that he is the same Abu-Sulaymān b. Ma'shar al-Buṣṭī of the Brethren, this is highly probable. Al-Subki ascribes to him a book entitled al-Ghaniyah 'an al-Kalām wa Ahlihī, in which he discusses the redundancy of kalam, a favourite subject of the Brethren.<sup>134</sup>

We know about Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Harūn al-Zanjānī from two contemporary reports. The first comes in al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānasah itself. Al-Tawhīdī, relating a story about a magian and a Jew, states that it was told to him by al-Zanjānī whom he described as a judge (qādī) and an adherent of the doctrine (ṣahīb al-madhhab).<sup>135</sup> Another contemporary writer, the renowned Mu'tazilite judge 'Abd al-Jabbar al-Ḥamadānī, the chief qādī of Rayy (d. 415/1024) also informs us that al-Zanjānī was a judge. In addition to this, he presents him as an Ismā'īlī and as a chief figure in the Ismā'īlī missionary activities. He named some of his followers as: Zayd b. Rifā'ah, Abu Aḥmad al-Nahrajurī, al-'Awqī and Abu Muḥammad b. Abī al-Baḡhl, a secretary and astrologer.<sup>136</sup>

A fairly comprehensive biography of Abu-Aḥmad al-Mihrajānī is given by Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī in his Mu'jam al-Uḍabā'. Yaqūt describes him as a middle-rank poet who resided in Baṣrah and who was known for his heresies. According to Yaqūt's account, he was well-versed in philosophy and the sciences of the ancients,

but was far less competent in the sciences of the Arabic language and as a composer of poems. He died in 403/1012.<sup>137</sup>

As for al-ʿAwqī,<sup>138</sup> many short entries appear in early sources which describe him as a philosopher. Ibn al-Nadīm, writing around 377/987, gave a short entry about him from which we learn that he was living in Baṣrah at that time. Although Ibn al-Nadīm left the space concerning al-ʿAwqī's works empty, it can be concluded that his main interests were in the field of philosophy. This is because Ibn al-Nadīm placed his entry in the chapter he devoted to philosophers.<sup>139</sup> This makes it highly probable that al-ʿAwqī of Ibn al-Nadīm is the same Abu al-Ḥasan al-ʿAwqī who appears in al-Baihaqī's Tārīkh Hukamāʾ al-Islām as the author of a short epistle entitled "Aqsām al-Mawjūdāt."<sup>140</sup> Ḥājji Khalīfah and al-Shahrazūrī also attribute to him the same epistle.<sup>141</sup>

A fuller and more sustained attempt to discredit al-Tawḥidī's report has recently appeared in an article by A. Hamdani. His argument, which is very interesting, is at the same time, as we hope to show, highly speculative and unconvincing. He attempts to establish two main points. The first is that al-Tawḥidī's main concern in his report was not to identify the authors of the Epistles but to establish the heresy of Zayd Ibn Rifāʿah by showing his association with "bad company," namely the Brethren. The second is to show that what al-Tawḥidī says about the authorship of the Epistles contradicts other contemporary accounts, namely those of al-Mantīqī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār.

To begin with Hamdani's first point, we find that it involves two persons, the vizir Ibn Saʿdān and al-Tawḥidī himself. Hamdani makes the claim that Ibn

Sa'dān was involved in Qarmaṭian activities through a certain Ibn Shahauyeh, a confidant of his who had been won over earlier to the Qarmaṭian cause. Hamdani assumes that Ibn Sa'dān wanted to know, through indirect questioning of al-Tawḥidī, the extent of public knowledge of his Qarmaṭian association. Thus, Hamdani goes on to suggest that Ibn Sa'dān, seeking this information indirectly, asked al-Tawḥidī about the beliefs of Zayd who, according to Hamdani, had a reputation for holding heretical ideas and who was a member of Ibn Sa'dān's group.<sup>142</sup>

It is difficult to accept this line of argument. For one thing, Ibn Sa'dān's inquiry about Zayd's beliefs is simply irrelevant to the issue of his assumed Qarmaṭian involvement. The most that Ibn Sa'dān could have got as an answer to such an inquiry would have been an illustration of Zayd's beliefs without any possible allusion to the expected public awareness of Ibn Sa'dān's Qarmaṭian sympathies. In fact, it does not make any sense to interpret Ibn Sa'dān's question about Zayd as an indirect way of trying to find out, through al-Tawḥidī, about his public image if we know that al-Tawḥidī himself had apprised Ibn Sa'dān of public rumours about his alleged association with the Qarmaṭians, fourteen days before their conversation involving Zayd and the Brethren.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, had it been the case that Ibn Sa'dān was trying to find out indirectly from al-Tawḥidī about the popular allegations that he was associated with the Qarmaṭians, he would have asked him, not about Zayd, but about Ibn Shahauyeh, the well-known Qarmaṭian figure and the prominent person in Ibn Sa'dān's circle. But, as it was just mentioned, there was no need for indirect questioning since al-

Tawḥidī himself had directly conveyed these popular allegations to the vizir. The most logical reason for asking about Zayd is hence the simplest, namely, to know something about an individual who was not only associated with heretical beliefs, but who was also noted as a philologist. Ibn Saʿdān, it has to be mentioned, was known for his interest in literature, philology and philosophy. If his concern from the inquiry about Zayd was to know about the extent of the public knowledge of his Qarmāṭian involvement, it would have been expected from him to direct the conversation with al-Tawḥidī to serve this end. On the contrary, the conversation was overwhelmed with a discussion of the philosophical beliefs of the Brethren and the reaction of the intellectuals to them.

The second person involved in Hamdani's argument is al-Tawḥidī himself. The premise of Hamdani's argument here is that al-Tawḥidī had a strong aversion to Zayd and wanted to harm him by associating him with the authors of an unorthodox work like the Epistles. Although Hamdani gives no specific reference, he mentions three of al-Tawḥidī's works when making this claim of dislike.<sup>144</sup> A careful reading of these three books gives no evidence of such dislike. Thus, for example, in al-Muqābasāt Zayd was never mentioned.<sup>145</sup> In al-Imtāʿ he is only mentioned in the context discussed above, where there is nothing to indicate animosity towards him. In the third book, Risālat al-Sadāqah wa al-Sadīq, Zayd's name appeared only once. Here al-Tawḥidī simply reports a statement Zayd had made, a report that is neutral and which does not convey anything that can be construed as either al-Tawḥidī's like or dislike of Zayd.<sup>146</sup>

If, for the sake of argument, one accepts Hamdani's claim that al-Tawhīdī hated Zayd, the plan which Hamdani assumes al-Tawhīdī followed to prove Zayd's heresies could not but be discarded as highly unconvincing. According to Hamdani, al-Tawhīdī, who wanted to accuse Zayd of heresy but who knew that Ibn Sa'dān was already aware of these heresies, brought the issue of the Epistles which reflect an unorthodox system of thought and fabricated Zayd's relation to its authors only to give credence to his accusation.<sup>147</sup> But this claim could have been accepted if the issue at hand was whether Zayd was a heretic or not. But if, according to Hamdani, al-Tawhīdī knew that Ibn Sa'dān was aware of the heresies of Zayd, then his resorting to inventing a story in order to verify an accusation which was already known becomes too improbable. Moreover, if it is true, as Hamdani claims, that the authorship of the Epistles was not the central concern of al-Tawhīdī's report but rather the association of Zayd with a heretical work, one would wonder why al-Tawhīdī would be so eager to name the authors when the nature of the work itself and not the identity of its authorship was the main factor of accusation. The improbability of this argument becomes more apparent when we know that Hamdani claims that al-Tawhīdī resorted to forgery when naming the authors of the Epistles. Hamdani argues that al-Tawhīdī's attribution of the Epistles to the persons he named is a fabrication because it is known that al-Tawhīdī had fabricated a letter which he attributed to the first caliph Abu-Bakr.<sup>148</sup> But here Hamdani is falling into the fallacy that if someone utters a false statement all his statements are therefore false. Whereas there is a clear religious motive in the case of the fabricated letter attributed to Abu-Bakr,<sup>149</sup> no motives have been shown in the case of his attributing the

Epistles to these individuals.<sup>150</sup>

What further shows al-Tawhīdī's honesty concerning the issue of authorship is a second report about the Epistles in another place in al-Imtā'. Ten days after the conversation concerning the Epistles and their authors took place and in the course of a purely ethical discussion in which neither Zayd's beliefs nor ibn Sa'dān's public image were mentioned, al-Tawhīdī gave a story about the effect of God's ability to help the powerless. Al-Tawhīdī started the story by stating that it was narrated to him by al-Zanjānī, one of the four persons previously reported by him as being responsible for the composition of the Epistles.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, this story is to be found in the Epistles ad verbum.<sup>152</sup> This means that when al-Tawhīdī, who heard the story from al-Zanjānī, sat down to write al-Imtā', he consulted an edition of the Epistles to give an accurate version of the story. This shows that al-Tawhīdī knew that he would find the story of al-Zanjānī in the Epistles. In other words, it indicates that al-Tawhīdī was not lying ten days earlier when relating al-Zanjānī, among others, to the Epistles.

Another premise of Hamdani's argument that al-Tawhīdī fabricated the story of the Epistle's authorship and Zayd's relation to it is that Zayd's name appeared in al-Tawhīdī's al-Sadāqah wa al-Sadīq but not his relation to the authors of the Epistles.<sup>153</sup> Hamdani argues that since Zayd was mentioned in al-Sadāqah wa al-Sadīq, his association with the Brethren should have also been mentioned. But this association is omitted. This suggests, for Hamdani, that al-Tawhīdī's statement in al-Imtā' associating Zayd with the Brethren is a



fabrication. But this again does not follow. Unlike the case with the Imtā' where Zayd's name and his relation with the Brethren come as an answer to a direct question about his beliefs and doctrinal affiliations, in Risālat al-Ṣadaqah wa al-Sadiq, al-Tawḥidī was simply reporting, on the authorship of Zayd, a statement of Ibn Sa'dān concerning his opinion on some individuals<sup>154</sup>; none of them, it has to be noted, are among the individuals mentioned by al-Tawḥidī in al-Imtā' as among the Brethren. In short, the interest of this passage of al-Ṣadaqah wa al-Sadiq is not Zayd but Ibn Sa'dān. It would have thus been quite unexpected from al-Tawḥidī to bring up the issue of the authorship of the Epistles in such an irrelevant context and to associate Zayd with it.

All the indications point to the high reliability of al-Tawḥidī's report concerning the authorship of the Epistles. It fits quite normally in the context of the seventeenth séance. The conversation between al-Tawḥidī and Ibn Sa'dān began that night with a purely philological discussion. This apparently reminded Ibn Sa'dān of some strange philological statements he had lately heard from Zayd the chancellor. He, thus, asked al-Tawḥidī, who was Zayd's copyist, if he happened to know of any doctrine underlying Zayd's curious philological statements. The only thing al-Tawḥidī could think of was Zayd's association with the Brethren whom he had met in Baṣrah and whose ideas as expressed in their epistles resemble those of Zayd in their diversity and shallowness.<sup>155</sup>

Al-Tawḥidī's report can be further proved reliable by the other two contemporary accounts of al-Manṭiqī and 'Abd al-Jabbār. This brings us to Hamdani's second main point, namely that there are inconsistencies between the

three reports which render them unreliable as a source for determining the authorship of the Epistles. A close examination, however, will show that the "inconsistencies" are at best only apparent. But before turning to Hamdani's critique, one must first consider the two reports of al-Mantiqi and 'Abd al-Jabbār and show how they confirm al-Tawhidi's account.

Al-Mantiqi, in his Siwān al-Hikmah, gives an entry about al-Maqdisi. He attributes the Epistles to him and gives a fairly long quotation regarding it as written by al-Maqdisi. This quotation is found word for word in the Epistles.<sup>156</sup> This makes Hamdani's suggestion that al-Mantiqi might have asked al-Tawhidi to fabricate the attribution of the Epistles to the Brethren implausible.<sup>157</sup> The Siwān is in essence a biographical dictionary of philosophers. The inclusion of al-Maqdisi among them as the author of the Epistles indicates quite clearly that al-Mantiqi had knowledge of his association with the Epistles. The work, though intended for the general educated reader, is academic. To suggest that al-Mantiqi included in it a deliberate fabrication is most unlikely.

As for 'Abd al-Jabbār's report, al-Zanjāni is mentioned in his Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubwāt in two different places. In one place, the author attacks al-Zanjāni, maintaining that despite the fact that he claims to be a good shi'ite, he, nonetheless, shows satisfaction in the current negligence of the dictates of the religious law (shari'ah) and in the acceptance of astrology by prominent political figures and members of the Quraish family.<sup>158</sup> (The propensity towards astrology, it should be noted, is characteristic of the Epistles.) In the second passage, 'Abd al-Jabbār mentions al-Zanjāni among those who referred to the

prophet Muḥammad as a liar and a sorcerer.<sup>159</sup> (If, for the sake of argument, one maintains that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was referring to the Brethren, this clearly conforms, yet in a distorted form, with their famous declaration, also found in al-Imtāʿ, that the prophets are sent only for the ailing hearts and are not needed by the healthy in soul.<sup>160</sup>)

But if the content of the three reports corroborates each other, what about the apparent textual contradictions? One of the points Hamdani makes, basing it on al-Imtāʿ, is that it was al-Tawḥidī who introduced al-Manṭiqī to the Epistles. This, for Hamdani, is inconsistent with the Siwān which indicates that al-Manṭiqī already knew them.<sup>161</sup> Hamdani's difficulty stems, as we see it, from the fact that he puts al-Manṭiqī's death in 375/985 around the same time al-Imtāʿ was written. This leads him to the inevitable assumption that the Siwān must have been written before al-Imtāʿ. But Badawī, in his introduction to Siwān al-Hikmah, argued convincingly that al-Manṭiqī lived at least until 390/999.<sup>162</sup> It follows that it is highly probable that in the early 370's when al-Tawḥidī was writing his al-Imtāʿ, al-Manṭiqī had not known about the Epistles, that he was actually introduced to them by al-Tawḥidī as mentioned in al-Imtāʿ and that he started writing Siwān al-Hikmah some time after he had read the Epistles.<sup>163</sup>

This would also provide an answer to a second seeming inconsistency concerning the number of the Epistles. Al-Tawḥidī puts the number as fifty while al-Manṭiqī gives it as fifty-one. To Hamdani this shows that al-Tawḥidī did not know the actual number of the Epistles, again implying that he was lying about

being acquainted with the Epistles.<sup>164</sup> It is, however, quite probable that by the time al-Tawhīdī was writing al-Imtā' the Epistles were only fifty and that another one had been already added when al-Mantiqī started writing Siwān al-Hikmah some time later and hence he mentioned the number of the Epistles as fifty-one.

Hamdani also points out that 'Abd al-Jabbār includes Abū al-Baḡhl as one of the followers of al-Zanjānī and that this individual is not included in al-Imtā' among the Brethren and that the name of al-Maqdisī is excluded in 'Abd al-Jabbār's account. Hamdani feels that these are inconsistencies in the reports. But are they inconsistencies? As for the addition of the name of Abū al-Baḡhl in 'Abd al-Jabbār's report, one must keep in mind that al-Tawhīdī did not confine the authors of the Epistles to the names he mentioned. As for the omission of the name of al-Maqdisī from 'Abd al-Jabbār's report, due attention should be given to the closing statement of the passage in which 'Abd al-Jabbār gives the names of al-Zanjānī and his group. It reads "all these are still alive and are residents of Basrah, while others are not in Basrah."<sup>165</sup> This statement suggests two possibilities for the omission of al-Maqdisī's name from this account. The first is that al-Maqdisī was dead by the time 'Abd al-Jabbār was writing in 385/995, almost ten years after al-Tawhīdī's report. The second is that al-Maqdisī was not living at the time in Basrah. This second possibility is supported by al-Tawhīdī's account from which one can infer that al-Maqdisī was a resident of Baghdād. There is, however, a third possible answer, which is best discussed in terms of two other points which Hamdani makes, namely a) that there is an

inconsistency between al-Tawḥidī's and al-Mantīqī's accounts regarding al-Maqqdisī's role, since the latter refers to al-Maqqdisī as the sole author of the Epistles, whereas al-Tawḥidī makes him one of several and b) that both al-Tawḥidī and 'Abd al-Jabbār refer to al-Zanjānī as the prominent figure among the group of the Brethren.<sup>166</sup>

Turning to the first of these two points, in al-Tawḥidī's account al-Maqqdisī was not just one of several authors, as Hamdani claims, but the prominent figure of a group of authors, his name heading their list in the *Imtā'*. It is extremely significant to note that when Ibn Sa'dān wanted to know the Brethren's reaction to al-Mantīqī's opinion of them, he asked al-Tawḥidī specifically about al-Maqqdisī's response. Added to this is al-Tawḥidī's report that followed concerning his personal attempts, and the attempts of others, to induce al-Maqqdisī, in particular, to debate the ideas expressed in the Epistles.<sup>167</sup> This indicates that he was considered the prominent figure among the authors and their spokesman. One can extract the same idea from al-Mantīqī's report. Careful reading of this report shows that al-Mantīqī does not say that al-Maqqdisī was the sole author. What he does say is "to him [al-Maqqdisī] belongs the fifty-one epistles,"<sup>168</sup> a statement which does not definitely mean that he alone wrote the Epistles. It could simply mean that the Epistles were usually attributed to him. Such an attribution is understandable in terms of the prominent role he, in all probability, played in composing the Epistles and coordinating the group.

This brings us to Hamdani's second point, namely that the prominency among the group of the Brethren was reserved by both al-Tawḥidī and 'Abd al-Jabbār

for al-Zanjānī and not for al-Maqdisī. Hamdani bases his case on al-Tawhīdī's reference to al-Zanjānī as sahib al-madhhab,<sup>169</sup> which he translates as the leader of the doctrine. But this is not necessarily what is intended by the expression. The most normal way to understand it is simply as referring to one noted as an adherent to a doctrine. This explains the appearance of al-Zanjānī in 'Abd al-Jabbār's report as one of the most prominent figures of the group, as "chief among them" and "leader among their leaders,"<sup>170</sup> to use 'Abd al-Jabbār's words, and not as "the" leader of the Baṣrah group as Hamdani claims that 'Abd al-Jabbār says.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, it is highly probable that when al-Tawhīdī described al-Zanjānī as "sahib al-madhhab" and when 'Abd al-Jabbār made him a chief among a group of people, they were not referring to his relation to the Brethren, but to another group and another doctrine. This is supported by the fact that 'Abd al-Jabbār's report on al-Zanjānī's activities comes in the course of his account of the activities of the Ismā'īlī missionaries. The individuals he mentioned and made al-Zanjānī "a leader among their leaders" were for him Ismā'īlī dā'īs.

This can help us answer another of Hamdani's arguments. Hamdani observes that although 'Abd al-Jabbār mentioned almost the same group as al-Tawhīdī did, he, unlike al-Tawhīdī, never referred to this group as being responsible for the Epistles.<sup>172</sup> Two possible reasons for this can be presented. 'Abd al-Jabbār, residing in Rayy, could have been unaware of the existence of the Epistles and was only aware of the fact that these persons were united together by their belief in certain ideas of which he was only orally acquainted. This oral acquaintance with their beliefs could be the reason why he mixed them up with

the Ismā'īlīs at a time when the accusation of being an Ismā'īlī (in the Abbasid realm) was equivalent to an accusation of being an atheist.<sup>173</sup> This assumption finds support in the two relevant passages in 'Abd al-Jabbār's report discussed above. These two passages obviously reveal the distorted picture 'Abd al-Jabbār had about the ideas he attributed to al-Zanjānī, namely, the negligence of shari'ah, the advocacy of astrology and the unimportance of prophets. These happen to be some of the most recurring themes in the Epistles, which, as we indicated earlier, were not represented accurately by 'Abd al-Jabbār. It does not seem likely that a great scholar like 'Abd al-Jabbār could have given such a distorted picture if he had read the Epistles themselves.

A second possible solution to why 'Abd al-Jabbār did not relate al-Zanjānī and his group to the Epistles (and which will also serve as the third solution to why 'Abd al-Jabbār's report omits al-Maqdisī's name) is that he was not concerned in his report with this aspect of their activities. 'Abd al-Jabbār's report differs from that of al-Tawhīdī in that it includes the name of Ibn Abī al-Baghl, omits the name of al-Maqdisī and includes Zayd as a member of the group and not only as a friend of the group as al-Tawhīdī states. Now, almost all scholars consider the group mentioned by 'Abd al-Jabbār and headed by al-Zanjānī to be the same group mentioned by al-Tawhīdī and headed by al-Maqdisī. This could not have actually been the case. It is highly probable that some of the persons named by 'Abd al-Jabbār, but not all of them, were among the Brethren and participated in composing the Epistles. But these, with others who were not among the Brethren, shared something that was not a main feature of the

Brethren's doctrine, namely a sympathetic view of Ismā'īlism. But the fact that some of the Brethren had Ismā'īlī sympathies, or were even Ismā'īlīs themselves, does not mean that the Epistles as representative of the Brethren's thought are an Ismā'īlī work. 'Abd al-Jabbār could have been aware of the existence of the Epistles and could have also been aware that some of the names he included in his account were those of the Brethren. But since he did not identify the Brethren as specifically Ismā'īlīs, he did not refer to their role in composing the Epistles. This would be a further indication that at that time the Epistles were not considered an Ismā'īlī work. (It is quite clear from the Imtā' that the Epistles were considered unorthodox in the same way that philosophical works, in general, were considered unorthodox.) All the indications are that there is a clear distinction between the Epistles as a collective work and the individual beliefs of some of its authors.

In conclusion, there is nothing in al-Tawḥidī's report itself that makes one doubt its validity. It is supported by two contemporary reports whose differences from it are not of the essence and do not constitute actual contradiction. In addition to this, the available medieval biographical entries about the individuals involved in al-Tawḥidī's report present us with a picture that conforms with this report. They are pictured in these works as unorthodox philosophers who strove to conceal not only their identity, but also the attribution of the ideas and works they were writing to themselves.

But if some scholars completely reject this theory which relates the Epistles to this Basrah group, others accept only the names given by al-Tawḥidī as being



the authors of the Epistles. But some like Nasr and Diwald, as we have seen, maintain that they represent some sort of sufī order. Awa and Fakhry made them Mu‘tazilite followers. A third group, however, represented by Stern, Marquet and Hijāb, make them Ismā‘ilīs. To this theory we shall now turn.

### 2. The Theory of Ismā‘ilī Authorship

Towards the end of the fifth/eleventh century, there emerged in the literature of the Nizari branch of the Ismā‘ilī da‘wah a theory which ascribed the Epistles to some of the chief dā‘is of an Ismā‘ilī imām. This is found in Risālat al-Uṣūl wa al-Ahkām of the dā‘ī Abū al-Ma‘ālī Ḥatim ibn Zuhrah (d. 497/1103).<sup>174</sup> He gave the names of the dā‘is responsible for the composition of the Epistles as ‘Abdullah ibn Maymūn al-Qaddāh, ‘Abdullah ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-Ḥusain, ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak and ‘Abdullah ibn Ḥamdān. He was not, however, clear regarding the identity of the imām under whose auspices the Epistles were written, as he made these individuals the dā‘is of imām Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl (132-193/749-808), as well as, his son, the first hidden imām, ‘Abdullah ibn Muḥammad (179-212/795-827).<sup>175</sup>

In time, it seems that the tendency of the Ismā‘ilīs to associate the Epistles with the period of concealment had taken over. Thus, we find the Syrian dā‘ī Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 817/1414) in his Fūṣūl wa Akhbār ascribing the Epistles to the hidden imām ‘Abdullah ibn Muḥammad whom he made a contemporary of al-Ma‘mūn. Apparently, in order to keep up with the earlier report about the four chief dā‘is, he made imām ‘Abdullah ibn Muḥammad dictate the Epistles to

his four dā'is whose role was to write down and compile the Epistles.<sup>176</sup>

Curiously enough, when, half a century later, the reference to the Epistles started to appear in the literature of the other branch of the Ismā'īlī da'wah, the Musta'liyan Ṭaiyibī, the issue of authorship was not involved. As far as it is known, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī (d. 557/1162) is the first to refer to the Epistles in his Kanz al-Walad.<sup>177</sup> A generation later, Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir (d. 584/1188) quotes from the Epistles in his al-Anwār al-Latīfah,<sup>178</sup> while his contemporary Ḥatīm ibn Ibrāhīm (d. 596/1199) reproduces most of the third and fourth epistles of the fourth section in his Tanbih al-Ghāfilīn.<sup>179</sup> It was only after half a century had passed since reference to the Epistles had begun to appear in the Yemenī Ismā'īlī literature, that an account of the origin of the Epistles was given for the first time. It appeared in Dāmigh al-Bātil of 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd al-Anf (d. 612/1215). This book is an answer to al-Ghazālī's polemic Fadā'ih al-Bāṭiniyah. Reference to the author of the Epistles comes in al-Anf's answer to al-Ghazālī's attack on the Ismā'īlī imāms accusing them of theological and philosophical shallowness. Al-Anf boasted that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity is an Ismā'īlī work and attributed them to an unnamed imām of al-Ma'mūn's period.<sup>180</sup> The first reference in the Yemenī Ismā'īlī literature to the name of the imām/author of the Epistles is to be found in al-Risālah al-Wahīdah fī Tathbīt Arkān al-'Aqidah of the dā'ī al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd al-Anf (d. 667/1269), to which we shall return in the section concerning the dating of the Epistles. But unlike the case with the Nizāris who specified the imām/author as the first hidden imām, 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad,

dā'ī al-Ḥusain attributed the Epistles to the latter's son, the second hidden imām, Aḥmad ibn 'Abdullah.<sup>181</sup> But it seems that, two centuries later, the earlier story of al-Ḥusain's father, which refrains from specifying the name of the imām, was still in vogue. Dā'ī Sharaf al-Dīn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah in al-Risālah al-Muqizah (dated 834/1430-1) simply reproduces the earlier story, keeping the name of the imām/author anonymous.<sup>182</sup> It was dā'ī Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1458) who gave the most detailed account of the origins of the Epistles in his Zahr al-Ma'ānī and 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār. Apparently, elaborating on the above mentioned Yemenī sources, he borrowed from them all to give his own version.<sup>183</sup> Thus, like both 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd and Sharaf al-Dīn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah, he made the imām/author a contemporary of al-Ma'mūn. At the same time, the anonymous imām of both dā'īs is identified by him as imām Aḥmad whose name he obviously borrowed from al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī's version.<sup>184</sup>

Needless to say, none of these reports can claim historicity. None of the dā'īs, of whom the earliest -- if he is the authentic author -- wrote more than two centuries after the incidents he reported, gave his sources.<sup>185</sup> Their contradictions concerning the name of the imām/author, as well as their inconsistencies with regard to the role of the chief dā'īs are significant. These inconsistencies in early Ismā'īlī sources put the burden on later medieval Ismā'īlī writers to try to resolve them. The attempt of dā'ī Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn is a clear example. However, because the contradictions are very serious, the attempts to resolve them are not convincing. H. Hamdani, for example, admits that it is impossible to verify the soundness of dā'ī Idrīs' theory.<sup>186</sup> A. Hamdani more

explicitly states that dā'ī Idrīs was forced to push back the time of imām Aḥmad to coincide with the reign of al-Ma'mūn in order to reconcile the conflicting reports of earlier Ismā'īlī dā'īs.<sup>187</sup> Even the reason given in these early Ismā'īlī sources for the composition of the Epistles contrasts totally, not only with the subject matter of the Epistles, but also with what the Brethren themselves clearly announced in the Epistles as their reason for writing them. The Ismā'īlī dā'īs agree that al-Ma'mūn's adoption of philosophy and astrology was the main reason that forced the imām of the time to write the Epistles in order to counteract al-Ma'mūn's attempt to destroy Muḥammad's religion.<sup>188</sup> The Brethren, on the other hand, mention that the successive translations of ancient philosophical books by the non-experts rendered them very complicated. Thus, they go on, the Epistles are an attempt on their behalf to simplify the knowledge contained in the books of the ancient philosophers in order to help the researchers and the beginners attain a better understanding of them.<sup>189</sup>

Despite these serious lapses in early Ismā'īlī sources, authors like Tamir still consider these reports as indisputable evidence of the Ismā'īlī identity of the Epistles, declaring that they render al-Tawḥidī's report devoid of any historic or scholarly value.<sup>190</sup> In an attempt to reconcile the conflicting Ismā'īlī reports regarding the name of the imām/author, Tamir himself falls into contradiction. In his book, Haqīqat Ikhwān al-Safa', he expresses his astonishment concerning dā'ī Idrīs' specification of imām Aḥmad, and not imām 'Abdullah, as the imām/author, implying his conviction that imām Aḥmad had no relation to the Epistles.<sup>191</sup> However, a few pages later, he declares that imām 'Abdullah started the

composition of the Epistles but died before finishing them. The task of completing the Epistles then fell on his son Aḥmad who finished them with the help of the four chief Dā'īs of the Nizārī theory.<sup>192</sup> Yet in another of his works, al-Imāmah fi al-Islam, a third theory is advanced. Here, he declares that the Epistles appeared during the imamate of 'Abdullah and that his son Aḥmad is the author of the Comprehensive Epistle, while the latter's son, al-Ḥusain, composed Jāmi'at al-Jāmi'ah.<sup>193</sup>

Another attempt at reconciliation is suggested by Ḥijāb. However, the attempt here is not only to synthesize the different Ismā'īlī reports but is mainly to reconcile these Ismā'īlī theories with the theories of the Baṣrah group and of al-Majriṭī. Ḥijāb maintains that the Epistles appeared in stages and were written by a chain of authors that included imām 'Abdullah, imām Aḥmad, the four chief dā'īs, al-Tawḥidī's group and al-Majriṭī. Because he believes that the Epistles are an Ismā'īlī work, he made all these authors Ismā'īlīs.<sup>194</sup>

A somewhat similar view is held by Marquet. He also believes that the Epistles were composed over a considerably long span of time and involved the efforts of a chain of consecutive authors. This chain, he suggests, could have started with dā'ī 'Abdullah ibn Maymūn al-Qaddāh and continued with his successors under the supervision of different imāms, including Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, 'Abdullah and Aḥmad.<sup>195</sup> He was more cautious than Ḥijāb in not including al-Majriṭī as a possible author of the Epistles, which he also considers to be an Ismā'īlī work. As for the Baṣrah group, he accepts the names given by al-Tawḥidī, but regards them as Ismā'īlī dā'īs. Because he believes that the

composition of the Epistles had already been completed by their time, he suggests that their role was confined to modifying, amplifying, splitting up and presenting the Epistles in a coherent form. Marquet makes another suggestion, namely that although the persons mentioned by al-Tawhidī were Ismā'īlis, they themselves had nothing to do with the writing and editing of the Epistles, but had simply accepted their attribution to them in order to conceal the identity of the real authors who were important public figures.<sup>196</sup>

In order to give credence to his conviction concerning the relation between the Epistles and Isma'ilism, Marquet, unlike Tamir, does not resort to the early Ismā'īlī reports about an Imāmī authorship. On the contrary, he tries in more than one article to prove this relation by comparing the ideas expressed in the Epistles with the system of thought of early Ismā'īlī thinkers like al-Nu'mān and al-Sijistānī.<sup>197</sup> But surprisingly enough, we find his vigorous declaration that the Epistles constitute the oldest expression of Ismā'īlī doctrine<sup>198</sup> is couched in cautious statements when he comes to substantiate this belief. Thus, although in one of his articles he considers the Brethren to be fanatic advocates of the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Imamate,<sup>199</sup> he admits in another article that the Epistles are obscure regarding this question.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, although he offers a lengthy discussion about the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the "hiptades" (sets of sevens), studying it in the light of the writings of early Ismā'īlī thinkers, he finds himself compelled to conclude that the Brethren never treated this crucial Ismā'īlī belief in an explicit manner and never elaborated on it.<sup>201</sup> Again, he considers that the seven ranks discussed by al-Nu'mān in his Kitāb al-Kashf correspond

exactly with the mystical hierarchy of the Brethren's spiritual city. But in a passage that follows he refers to the fact that the Brethren's spiritual city consists of four grades only.<sup>202</sup> If we add to this what was discussed earlier concerning his arbitrary allegorical interpretation of some of the passages of the Epistles to show that they are an Ismā'īlī work,<sup>203</sup> one cannot but conclude that his argument that the Epistles "constitute an attempt to arrange and fix the official doctrine of Ismā'ilism" remains unpersuasive.<sup>204</sup> Marquet, it should be noted, admits that intellectual differences between the Brethren and tenth century Ismā'īlī thinkers do exist. But he explains these differences as due to the Brethren's resorting to the principle of taqiyyah.<sup>205</sup> He does not entertain as a possibility the view, which we shall try to show is substantiated by the text, that the Epistles were influenced by Ismā'īlī ideas but do not represent an expression of Ismā'īlī doctrine.

Marquet's dogmatism on this point finds no room to accommodate Stern's more moderate view of the Epistles' Ismā'īlī authorship. Stern, like Marquet, accepts al-Tawhīdī's report and considers the individuals named by him to be among the authors. Again, like Marquet, he believes that these authors are connected with Ismā'ilism. But to Marquet's resentment, Stern thinks that the Brethren must have elaborated a doctrine that was out of tune with the main body of the contemporary Ismā'īlī movement and that the Epistles were not accepted by Ismā'ilism until a century or two later.<sup>206</sup> Stern obviously adopted this opinion as a way out of a dilemma he believes existed. On the one hand, as he observes, the Epistles did not exercise any noticeable influence on the

Ismā'īlī thinkers of the period; on the other, he maintains it can be inferred from both al-Tawḥidī's and 'Abd al-Jabbār's contemporary reports that this group was connected with Ismā'ilism.<sup>207</sup>

An examination of 'Abd al-Jabbār's and al-Tawḥidī's reports, however, shows that Stern's dilemma is more apparent than real. Since 'Abd al-Jabbār's report with respect to the Ismā'ilism of the group he mentioned has already been discussed,<sup>208</sup> we will confine ourselves here to al-Tawḥidī's report. Stern believes that al-Tawḥidī expressed in al-Imtā' his awareness of the Shī'ism of the authors of the Epistles, and that he "brands them as the heirs to the heresies of certain thinkers qualified as Bāṭinīs: Abū Tammām al-Naisabūrī and Abū al-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī."<sup>209</sup>

To start with, the passage on which Stern based his argument is not al-Tawḥidī's but is attributed to a certain al-Ḥarīrī. Al-Tawḥidī is simply reporting it. In this report, al-Ḥarīrī criticizes al-Maqdisī's theory of the harmonization of philosophy and religion and maintains that it is doomed to failure. Ancients and contemporaries, al-Ḥarīrī argues, have tried to spread this theory among the people but without success. He then mentions as examples three contemporary Islamic thinkers: Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, who proclaimed himself to be a Zaidī Shī'ite; Abū Tammām al-Naisabūrī, who served the Shī'ite movement in general; and al-'Āmirī, who attached himself to Ibn al-'Amīd's court and to sāhib al-jaysh of Naisabur.<sup>210</sup> The passage, no doubt, associates these figures with Shī'ism. However, two things have to be pointed out here. First of all, this passage does not refer to these figures as Ismā'ilīs in particular and in the case of the



first he is said to have proclaimed himself a Zaydī. Secondly, it is quite obvious, as one reads this report, that al-Ḥarīrī attacks these figures for their philosophical beliefs, not their religious affiliation. This becomes very clear in the case of al-ʿĀmirī, who is attacked not only for his theory of the harmony of religion and philosophy, but also for upholding the doctrines of the world's eternity, and its concomitant Aristotelian doctrines of space and time.

Al-Ḥarīrī accuses all three of blasphemy and describes them, not as Bāṭinīs, but as the heirs to such infidels as "Aristotle, Socrates and Plato."<sup>211</sup> Admittedly, al-Ḥarīrī expresses his conviction that the notion of zāhir and bāṭin, which al-ʿĀmirī adopts and claims to be found in the books of these Greek philosophers, is but the invention of those who want to slander Islam. He identifies the latter with certain astronomers of Qazwīn who set their dāʿīs to seduce people.<sup>212</sup> Al-Ḥarīrī's statement is not clear. The use of the term "dāʿīs" suggests Shīʿite doctrine. But this need not be the case. Various groups had dāʿīs. But even if this group is Shīʿite, it does not follow that they were Ismāʿīlīs. Moreover, in this respect, al-Ḥarīrī is aware that al-ʿĀmirī maintains that the roots of his belief in the concept of zahir and batin, underlying his theory of the harmony of philosophy and religion, are to be found in the teachings of the Greek philosophers. In disputing this belief, al-Ḥarīrī is not necessarily equating al-ʿĀmirī with the astronomers of Qazwīn (whether Shīʿite or not), but maintains that, knowingly or unknowingly, he shares their belief on this particular point.

In short, nothing in al-Ḥarīrī's speech reported by al-Tawḥīdī justifies Stern's statement that the figures mentioned in it are qualified as Bāṭinīs. They

were attacked mainly for their philosophical beliefs. One of their philosophically based beliefs is equated with a belief held by the Shi'is, but this does not make them Shi'ites themselves. Moreover, nothing in al-Tawhidi's report implies that the Brethren were viewed as the heirs of these assumed Bāṭinis. All that one can find there is an attack on al-Maqdisi's philosophical concept of the identity of philosophy and religion which, apparently, reminded the attacker of similar beliefs held by other philosophers, one of them, one has to note, being a contemporary, namely al-ʿĀmirī. What is most significant is that al-Maqdisi, who is attacked for upholding the theme of reconciling religion with philosophy, is not referred to as a Shi'ite.

When Marquet rejects Stern's opinion, he bases this on the argument that the Epistles contain Ismāʿilī ideas.<sup>213</sup> If they contain Ismāʿilī ideas -- and this seems to be Marquet's logic -- then they are an Ismāʿilī work, and ideas that are not Ismāʿilī must not be taken on their face value but interpreted symbolically. This brings us to the heart of the matter concerning what the Epistles are all about. Although this will be treated fully in the chapter discussing their thought, those aspects of their thought relevant to the thesis of Marquet and others, who hold similar views, will have to be introduced here.

The borrowing of Ismāʿilī ideas in the Epistles is undeniable. But before one draws the conclusion that they are therefore an Ismāʿilī work, one must consider, not only the eclectic nature of these Epistles, but also the structure of the work as a whole. Once one considers their over-all structure of thought, one perceives how irreconcilable they are with Ismāʿilī tenets. The arguments

of Marquet that the non-Ismā'īlī elements represent aspects of taqiyyah, and of Hamdani that they represent a policy intended to lure people of all persuasions into accepting Ismā'ilism, will then fall flat.<sup>214</sup> This is because the concepts in the Epistles which are irreconcilable with Ismā'ilism are not unrelated, scattered concepts, but constitute fundamental ideas without which the structure of the work collapses. To see this, we will begin with some comparisons.

The Brethren, for example, are ardent advocates of analogy (qiyās).<sup>215</sup> They call it "the balance of truth" (mīzān al-haqq) by which one knows true from false. They fiercely attack those who reject it, insisting that the defect is in them and not in analogy as a tool, accusing them of being unable to use and benefit from it. Their position on this question is in sharp contrast with the teachings of the great fourth/tenth century Ismā'īlī thinker, al-Sijistānī, who attacks analogy and refuses to admit the human right to reason.<sup>216</sup> This position is endorsed by al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020), regarded as the greatest of the Ismā'īlī thinkers. He argues that God forbids the community to give personal judgment about litigated matters. The judgment here, he goes on, belongs to God, acting through the Imām and, hence, the presence of the Imām cannot be dispensed with.<sup>217</sup> In other words, the rejection of analogy is basic to the Ismā'īlī argument for the necessity of the Imām. Hence, the Brethren's ardent affirmation of the need for analogy is a rejection of a basic Ismā'īlī tenet. But there is more to it than this. The Brethren declare that the power of reason can take the place of the political leader (they use here the term khalifah) and act as the sole guide and commander of the soul.<sup>218</sup>

This, in particular, is in complete contrast with the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Imamate, the cornerstone of their belief. Al-Qādī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974) speaks in his Da'ā'im al-Islām about the seven pillars of Islam. The first of these pillars is belief (īmān) which, he goes on, is:

"to witness that there is no God but God, and Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger; to believe in Heaven, Hell, Resurrection, and Doomsday, in God's Prophets and Messengers and in the Imams, to know and acknowledge the imam of the time and to submit to his will. ..."<sup>219</sup>

The Brethren, on the other hand, observed that the question of the Imamate was the cause of the greatest dissension in the Is'īic community after the death of the prophet and that it lead to continuous division and inner strife.<sup>220</sup> They lament that this issue did not only provoke strife among the scholars, but that bloodshed was also justified in its name.<sup>221</sup> It is true that the Brethren maintained that the recognition of a true and worthy Khalīfah is useful as an aid to salvation and that what holds any community together is an able leader.<sup>222</sup> But they did not declare the imamate as a pillar of Islam. Thus, they advise their brethren, if they are unable to find the true Khalīfah, to "make your reason [a] Khalīfah over your soul," to accept its dictates and to avoid passion.<sup>223</sup> Acknowledgement and submission to the imām of the time as the only way for the individual to achieve true belief is unheard of in the Epistles. Significantly, after declaring that there are certain qualifications that ought to be possessed by the prophet, they observe that these qualifications are the heritage of his community (ummah) after his death. If they are to be found in one man, then, this would be the prophet's successor. But if these qualifications are dispersed in a group of

individuals, then, these individuals ought to rule collectively. This group ought to make the ummah follow the sharī'ah and sunnah of the lawgiver.<sup>224</sup> But they themselves must follow a certain leader and the leader which God made over the best of his rational creatures is reason (‘aql). Thus, the Brethren declare that they themselves made reason their leader and arbitrator.<sup>225</sup>

In an important passage, they describe the way in which the follower of a certain religion can lead the best life in this world and the next. The members of this religion must: a) be endowed with reason that helps them discern good and evil in order to commit the good and refrain from evil; b) follow the sunnah of the lawgiver; c) study regularly the injunctions of the lawgiver; and d) install a leader for each group among them, who is the best of this group, who knows the religious law and guards its implimentation. After making this statement they proceed to declare that the rational, wise men do not need a leader. This, they argue, is because their reason, together with the guide (literally power) of the sharī'ah revealed to the lawgiver, in which they are supposed to be well-versed, is sufficient for them to gain salvation.<sup>226</sup>

Moreover, the role of the īmām, as understood by the ismā‘īlīs, is not to be found in the Epistles. The ismā‘īlīs recognize the īmām as the one who guides the believers to true knowledge and through whom the knowledge of the other pillars of Islam is grasped.<sup>227</sup> It is true that the Brethren stress the importance of the teacher and his role in the spiritual life of the individual. They idealize the function of the teacher and see it as one of spiritual fatherhood which, for them, transcends physical fatherhood.<sup>228</sup> They declare that one of

the signs of good fortune is to be blessed by a teacher who is intelligent, has good manners, loves knowledge, seeks after truth and does not fanatically adhere to any single doctrine.<sup>229</sup> But this teacher, this spiritual father who nourishes the soul and guides it to everlasting bliss, is not identified in the Brethren's scheme with the imām. On the contrary, they declare him as anyone who is blessed with knowledge and who, as a way of thanking God, must aid his brothers by communicating to them a share of his intellectual possessions.<sup>230</sup> More significant still is that the rationalistic tendency of the Brethren is in sharp contrast with the belief in the imām as an infallible guide and teacher demanded by the Ismā'īlīs.<sup>231</sup> Despite the exalted rank in which the Brethren placed the teacher, they asked their followers not to accept blindly what is taught to them. They advise them to question whatever they are taught and to select what their own reason dictates.<sup>232</sup> Although they advise the brethren living in this period which was full of sectarianism to resort to the truly learned men whom they identify as the people of reminiscence (ahl al-dhikr) from the house of prophets, they qualify these by stating that the people of reminiscence are, in a certain respect, nothing other than the reason in us which reminds the soul of its real abode.<sup>233</sup>

Even the sources of knowledge, which the Brethren acknowledge, put them apart from the Ismā'īlīs. Although, like the Ismā'īlīs, they are after true knowledge of God and of the spiritual world, the path each follows to achieve this differs drastically. For the Ismā'īlīs the only way to true knowledge is ilm al-bātin; and because the imām is the only key to this science, it follows that true knowledge is attained only through the imām of the time. A saying

attributed to imām Ja‘far al-Šadiq clearly explains this position of the imām in the Ismā‘ilī faith:

“God is worshipped through us, and through us He is either obeyed or disobeyed: he who obeys us obeys God, and he who disobeys us disobeys God. ... We are the gate of God, His evidence, the guarantors of His creatures, the keepers of His secret and the depositories of His knowledge.”<sup>234</sup>

Philosophy, as a source of true knowledge, is fiercely attacked by al-Sijistānī. For him, it is but satanic myths that cause man to deviate from the true knowledge of the Divine.<sup>235</sup>

It is true that the Brethren acknowledge the notion of zāhir and bātin and of the allegorical interpretation of the Qur’ān. However, they never make this knowledge the exclusive possession of any one man. On the contrary, they declare that according to the books of “political philosophy” men have to endeavour, each according to his own capacity, to awaken his soul out of foolish sleep by means of reasoning and by acquiring good merits in order to gain salvation.<sup>236</sup> Although an upright teacher is recommended by them, as mentioned above, they do not see him as an imām. True knowledge, although not available to all rational beings, is not the monopoly of the imām and those he finds capable of having its secrets disclosed to them. It is gained through philosophical thought and is attained by those who are intellectually capable of grasping it. These are the most glorious among the rational beings, namely, the philosophers whom the Brethren make the inheritors of the prophets:

"The best human being(s) are the rational, and the superiors among the rational are the men of learning, and the highest in grade and the loftiest in rank among the men of learning are the prophets, peace be upon them, and after them in rank are the wise philosophers."<sup>237</sup>

"The prophets, peace be upon them, are God's ambassadors between Him and His creatures, and the men of learning are the heirs of the prophets and the wise men are the best among the men of learning."<sup>238</sup>

Philosophy as a means of gaining true knowledge is greatly exalted by the Brethren. They define philosophy as the assimilation of the soul to God in the degree possible for man,<sup>239</sup> and as the comprehensive science by means of which complete virtue is attained.<sup>240</sup> Philosophy and sharī'ah, they observe, are both divine and, hence, they have the same aim though their tools differ.<sup>241</sup> They bring home the point by repetition of stories from the philosophers' lives and citations from their books that are placed in the Epistles, side by side with parallel narratives from prophetic lore.<sup>242</sup> The books of the philosophers are declared by the Brethren to be a main source of their knowledge, as much as the books revealed to the prophets are. They advise their Brethren not to reject any science and not to abandon any book.<sup>243</sup>

In this connection, Hamdani raises a point which cannot be ignored. He admits that philosophical books come first in the Brethren's ranking of their sources of knowledge. At the same time, however, he draws attention to the fact that the Brethren criticized the philosophers for their scepticism in religious matters.<sup>244</sup> What Hamdani points out is true. But it has to be read in the context



of their theory of worship. They held that there are two kinds of worship, legal worship (‘ibādah shar‘iyah) and philosophical worship (‘ibādah falsafiyah). Philosophical worship, they maintain, is higher than the former. But, philosophical worship, they insisted, is unattainable unless one first passes through the stages of legal worship. Legal worship is the stage of islām (submission), philosophical worship is the stage of imān (belief).<sup>245</sup> They maintain that the stage of philosophical worship is attained only by those who are intellectually capable of reaching it, whereas the stage of legal worship must be fulfilled by all. The philosophers criticized by the Brethren are those who do not accept the basic tenets of the sharī‘ah and who reject the books revealed to the prophets as myths.<sup>246</sup> According to the Brethren, the books of the prophets contain the literal meaning of the one truth and are revealed to help those who are incapable of grasping the truth without aid.<sup>247</sup> Thus, one can deduce that, for them, the philosopher who rejects the revealed books is rejecting the truth in one of its forms. This explains why they, for example, attack the philosophers who hold that the world is eternal.<sup>248</sup> But this does not mean that they denounce the philosophers, as Hamdani's statement implies. In fact, in the epistle about the animals, all representatives of human races and religions were attacked by the representatives of the animals with the one exception of the Greek, the representative of philosophical knowledge.<sup>249</sup> Finally, the Brethren hold that the philosophers are potential angels, becoming actual angels when they die.<sup>250</sup> This is hardly an Ismā‘ilī view.

We must now turn to those aspects of the Epistles that pertain to the position of the early caliphs and the place of 'Alī. Admittedly, prophetic anecdotes, usually related by Shī'īs, that reserve a high place for 'Alī do exist in the Epistles.<sup>251</sup> From this, however, it does not necessarily follow that the Brethren are Shī'īs. Sunnīs also have a very high regard for 'Alī as Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, acknowledge him as the rightful fourth caliph,<sup>252</sup> share with the Shī'īs disenchantment with the Battle of Ṣiffin and its consequences and regard the martyrdom of his son al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' as an Islamic tragedy.<sup>253</sup>

The Brethren lament the blood shed between Muslims and the killing of the most glorious imāms (al-a'immaḥ al-Khairūn).<sup>254</sup> The Brethren do not specify, but indications are that the reference is to the orthodox caliphs as much as it is to 'Alī's descendants. There is a passage, for example, in which they describe the catastrophes that fell on the prophet's house before the battle of Karbalā'. These catastrophes, they continue, haunted his successors as well, namely, al-Ṣiddīq, al-Farūq and Dhū al-Nūrain. Significantly, they describe them as the most worthy of ruling after the prophet.<sup>255</sup> Dhū al-Nūrain, it has to be noted, is a reference to 'Uthmān.<sup>256</sup> It should also be noted that the usage of the term "imāms" does not have any Shī'ī connotation. The Brethren identify the imāms with the caliphs and write in one place that "the imāms are the successors of prophets" (al-a'immaḥ hom khulafā' al-anbiā').<sup>257</sup>

The aversion displayed by the Brethren against sectarianism in general and against the killings committed under its banner indicate further that they were not Shī'īs. Very significant in this regard is their criticism of a verse

lamenting the martyrdom of al-Ḥusain. They observe that verses like this aroused the instincts of hatred and revenge between cousins and led to the shedding of yet more blood.<sup>258</sup> Likewise, they denounced the massacres that took place between the ʿAbbasids and the Marwanids.<sup>259</sup>

The Brethren's insistence that they are the closest to the prophet, and hence, the most worthy of carrying the responsibility of his sharīʿah,<sup>260</sup> has been used as an argument by the Ismāʿīlīs. But their statement does not necessarily mean that they are claiming that they are related to the prophet by blood ties. It could mean that they see themselves as the possessors of the true meaning of his message and are, hence, the most capable of preaching it among the people. The Brethren, however, do use some of the Ismāʿīlī terminology, such as: al-qāʾim, al-sābiʿ, dawr al-kashf and dawr al-satr.<sup>261</sup> The implication of these notions on the Brethren's system of thought will be fully discussed in the coming chapter. Here, it is sufficient to remark that although the terminology is borrowed from Ismāʿīlī literature, the concepts that underlie them are, as with most other borrowed concepts, fully adapted to the unique philosophy of the Brethren.

There is, however, another side to this. Such terms used by the Brethren are sometimes interpreted by modern advocates of an Ismāʿīlī authorship quite arbitrarily as Ismāʿīlī. Thus, H. Hamdani maintains, without any supporting evidence, that terms like ṣāhib al-amr, ṣāhib al-zamān and ṣāhib al-nāmūs used by the Brethren refer to the Ismāʿīlī imām. He admits, however, that the usage in the Ismāʿīlī literature of the terminology of the Epistles is but a late development.<sup>262</sup> Again he holds that the salutation pronounced at the beginning

of each epistle upon "[God's] servants whom he selects" ('ibād [Allah] al-ladhīn istafā) is meant for the imāms.<sup>263</sup> Awa comments that this salutation is not confined to the Shī'ite literature. It is used also in the Ṣūfī writings.<sup>264</sup>

A. Hamdani's writings reflect the same theme. Thus, the Brethren's insistence that religious law (sharī'ah) has an esoteric and an exoteric meaning and their classification of people according to their intellectual abilities is declared by him as a decisive factor that places the Brethren in the Ismā'ilī camp.<sup>265</sup> The fact that these views are adopted by the Islamic philosophers as well is not taken into consideration by him. In order to prove his argument that the Brethren advocated Baṭinī knowledge in the Ismā'ilī sense, he abridged eight pages of the Epistles into a ten-line paragraph, twisting the meaning to serve his purpose.<sup>266</sup> These pages in the Epistles speak about the necessary beliefs that the lawgiver must hold, how he proclaims his message to the community, each according to his intellectual abilities, his duties towards his community, the different stages of believers and the criteria according to which they are classified. Hamdani, in his argument, changed the lawgiver (wadī' al-sharī'ah) into the Imām-lawgiver and made the followers of the message of the lawgiver, the Ismā'ilī du'ah, or "members of the religio-political organization called the Da'wah." The duty of the lawgiver in transmitting the true meaning of the sharī'ah to those capable of grasping it, while instructing the masses in its literal form, is presented by him as if it is the exclusive task of the du'ah to invite people to the Ismā'ilī faith, each according to his capabilities in order to win them over. He closes his comments by saying that these du'ah "are bound

by fraternal ties and joining of hearts (ta'lif qulūbihim) so that they can unite in work and word." But this is not to be found in the original text of the Epistles which speaks about how the lawgiver instructs the followers of his message to love each other. This is followed by the authors' invitation to their brethren to follow the lawgiver's injunction and to be bound together by fraternal ties. Thus, while the whole text here speaks about the first leader, the founder of a new religion, and his duty with regard to his religious message,<sup>267</sup> Hamdani, by changing this first leader into an Ismā'īlī imām, gives the whole text an Ismā'īlī political overtone that is not actually there.

Likewise, the Brethren's prediction of the near destruction of the state of evil people, which they identify as the state where ignorance prevails, and the appearance of the state of the virtuous people in which true knowledge spreads,<sup>268</sup> is interpreted by him politically. He insists that the Brethren are giving the good tidings (bashārah) of the near success of the hidden Ismā'īlī imām in overthrowing the 'Abbasid state (the state of evil people) and in establishing the Fatimid caliphate (the state of virtuous people).<sup>269</sup>

Again, he arbitrarily interprets the meaning of the satr period and kashf period to serve his purpose. For, while the Brethren treat this subject in a complete metaphysical context, he insists on a purely political interpretation. Thus, the satr period, which the Brethren speak of as nearing its end and which they identify as the period when the true knowledge of the spiritual world is hidden from most of the people and is attainable only by those who prove themselves capable of grasping it through continuous philosophical reasoning and moral

behaviour,<sup>270</sup> is seen by him as the period of the concealment of the Ismā'īlī imāms.<sup>271</sup> On the other hand, the kashf period, which the Brethren believe is close at hand and which they identify as the period in which true knowledge is no more hidden, when the universal soul grasps the knowledge in the universal intellect, ensuring the end of the world,<sup>272</sup> is regarded by Hamdani as the period of the appearance of the hidden imām and the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate.<sup>273</sup>

It is true that the Brethren were waiting for a lord whom they sometimes call the seventh leader (al-ra'īs al-sābi').<sup>274</sup> But contrary to what Hamdani (and Marquet) claim, the Brethren's awaited chief was not the hidden Ismā'īlī imām and they were not his chief dā'īs who were trying to infiltrate the various classes of people on his behalf, preparing the climate, on his order, for the appearance of his cause.<sup>275</sup> In a significant passage of the Epistles, the Brethren made it clear that the lord they are waiting for did not reveal himself to them. It follows that he did not recruit them to work on his behalf. They state that, contemplating the deteriorating situation of their times, they become certain that the end to all this is very close. Thus, using the method of astronomical divination, they were able to establish the exact date of the change and to know the "characteristics" of the lord who would bring this change about.<sup>276</sup> The passage can even be read as if the Brethren are saying that this lord does not know what is destined for the world at his hands.<sup>277</sup>

Hamdani goes on to say that the Epistles lay great emphasis on the number seven as the perfect number.<sup>278</sup> This, however, is not the case. The Brethren

do not give this number any special status. Their interest in the number "seven" is always explained in a purely arithmological context<sup>279</sup> and their preference for other numbers, particularly the numbers four, eight, nine and twelve, is repeatedly expressed.<sup>280</sup> More indicative in this regard is that they explicitly denounced the "seveners" (al-musabi'ah) in more than one place for their partial outlook, for their exaggeration of the importance of the sets of seven and for their negligence of the importance of other numbers.<sup>281</sup> In one place, they declare that they will not discuss the heptades because a group of researchers are fascinated by them, and have spoken about them at too great a length.<sup>282</sup> This clearly implies that they do not consider themselves as belonging to this group (i.e. the seveners). The same could be said about a chapter in the Epistles which they entitled "Chapter in addressing the Shī'ites" and from which it appears that they do not consider themselves as belonging to this sect, although they admit that, like them (and like all Muslims), they love and appreciate 'Alī.<sup>283</sup>

But Hamdani's attempt to prove the Ismā'ilī identity of the Epistles is not confined to pointing out what he considers to be internal evidence. He also tries to find an explanation for the un-Ismā'ilī references in the Epistles. Here again his arguments are far from compelling. The explanation he presents for the existence of such "sunni" sympathies, as he calls them, is either that they point to a Zaidī Shī'ī connection of the authors of the Epistles or that they are simply later interpolations.<sup>284</sup> As for the first suggestion, he himself contradicts it when he goes on to deny the assignment of the Epistles to Zaidī authorship, giving evidence for this.<sup>285</sup> Turning to the second explanation, let

us consider what he regards as later interpolations. There is, to begin with, the optative declaration "may God be pleased with him" occurring, in the Epistles, after the name of Umar I. Then there is a citation of a prophetic tradition on the authority of 'Ā'ishah and a passage that denounces the rawāfid among other religious groups.<sup>286</sup> Hamdani gives no reason why he considers these to be interpolations other than his belief that the work is a Shī'ī Ismā'ilī work which cannot include such utterances. But this is assuming the point at issue. Moreover, if these are to be regarded as interpolations, by the same logic, why not regard such prophetic traditions encountered in the Epistles as "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate" and "I and you ['Alī] are the fathers of this community" as interpolations by later Shī'ī editors particularly when Ismā'ilīs embraced this work as an expression of their doctrine?<sup>287</sup>

In fact, if the addition or omission of a word or a phrase can be ruled out as editorial change, one should look instead for recurring ideas and lengthy passages. In this regard one can point out that the praiseworthy reference to Umar is not derived only from the addition of the salutation "may God be pleased with him" to his name, but mainly from the fact that a passage followed in which his recommendation to read certain chapters of the Qur'ān is cited.<sup>288</sup> More significant still is the fact that the first three caliphs were spoken of in reverent tones in a passage that describes them as al-Siddīq, al-Farūq and Dhū al-nūrain,<sup>289</sup> the well-known titles of Abu-Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān respectively. H. Hamdani in an attempt to explain this away, draws attention to the seventh century Ismā'ilī da'ī al-Ḥusain ibn al-Walīd's strange interpretation



of this passage as referring, instead, to ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain respectively.<sup>290</sup> A. Hamdani, on the other hand, in an attempt to rule out any sunnī sympathy, declares that this passage may possibly indicate a Zaidī respect for the first three caliphs.<sup>291</sup> But, as mentioned earlier, this explanation is contradicted by his rejection of any Zaidī identity of the Epistles. Marquet, reflecting on the same passage, maintains that all three titles apply to ‘Alī.<sup>292</sup> Although it is true that the Shī‘īs attribute to the prophet a saying in which he describes ‘Alī as al-Farūq and al-Siddīq, the title Dhū al-Nurain is known to be a title of ‘Uthmān alone.<sup>293</sup>

One can also refer here to the prophet's saying, "My companions are like the stars, you will be guided by whomever of them you follow," cited in two different places of the Epistles,<sup>294</sup> and which reflects a deep respect for all the prophet's companions. The assassination of ‘Uthmān which one would expect to be exalted by the Brethren, if they were really Shī‘īs, is, on the contrary, recited as a proof of their concept that the true believer should submit to his fate and be content with the divine decree.<sup>295</sup> But the most important declaration of the Epistles in this regard comes in a brief, yet very significant, passage. Here the Brethren recite the prophet's saying to Anas, "Open the door for him [speaking about ‘Uthmān] for he is the walī of this community after ‘Umar."<sup>296</sup> The full implication of this statement does not only clearly show the Brethren's acceptance of the caliphate of ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, but also their belief that their precedence to ‘Alī in leading the community is both predicted and recommended by the prophet, a belief which no Ismā‘īlī would ever hold. Thus Hamdani's claim that there is

not much in the Epistles to reflect sunnī sympathies, as well as Marquet's claim that the Brethren demonstrate acute hostility towards the first three caliphs throughout the Epistles,<sup>297</sup> is not accurate.

Also in a passage which denounces some of the religious factions, the Brethren attack the rawafid,<sup>298</sup> a term used by the Sunnīs to indicate the non-Zaidī Shī'īs. Hamdani's answer to this denunciation is that the whole passage is a definite interpolation.<sup>299</sup> But, in a later article, he reverses his opinion, ruling out that the passage is an editorial interpolation.<sup>300</sup> However, he offers no explanation as to why the rawafid are attacked by the Brethren.

Finally, Hamdani maintains that the Brethren make the mahdī-imāms the successors of the prophets.<sup>301</sup> An examination of the passage on which this claim is based reveals that the Brethren are speaking about both the mahdī-imāms and the khulafā' as the true inheritors of prophetic knowledge.<sup>302</sup> The Brethren's use of the terms khalīfah and imām, it has to be noted, is loose and interchangeable. As mentioned earlier, they identify the imām, in one place, as the khalīfah. In many other places, they use the terms imām and khalīfah side by side, reserving for them either the same role or the same high rank.<sup>303</sup> There is nothing in the text that proves that when the term imām is used the Ismā'īlī imām is meant.

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To conclude: It is undeniable that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity came to be the standard work used in the Ismā'īlī literature and that they

were very widely studied by the dā'is as their "qur'ān after the qur'ān."<sup>304</sup> But this interest in the Epistles came later, at least a century after they were first mentioned by al-Tawhīdī. This is certainly a puzzle. One would think that if they were an Ismā'īlī work to begin with, they would have been recognized in Ismā'īlī circles much earlier. It is important to mention that the general sunnī attitude reflected the same approach to the Epistles. Al-Ghazālī, for example, who died in 505/1111, did not consider the Epistles an Ismā'īlī work. In his al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl two references to the Brethren and their Epistles occur. In both places, however, the Brethren were referred to, not as Ismā'īlīs, but as philosophers although one of the two references comes in the chapter about the Ta'limis.<sup>305</sup>

Actually, if one wants to reach a decision concerning the question of the Brethren's identity, one has to look at what they themselves say about this identity. As mentioned earlier, the Brethren ridiculed all forms of sectarianism, holding them responsible for the miseries of mankind.<sup>306</sup> They insist that all religions have one and the same message, regardless of the differences in the rules that govern daily life.<sup>307</sup> They denounce the man who fights his brother in the same religion because of different sectarian beliefs.<sup>308</sup> In one place they declare that brotherhood among human beings is mainly spiritual and must transcend all religious, blood and territorial ties.<sup>309</sup> In a significant passage where they identify the ideal man, their universalism becomes quite obvious. They describe him as:

"... Persian by affiliation, Arab in religion, Ḥanafī in legal rite, Iraqī in his humanism, Hebrew in intrinsic significance, Christian in conduct, Syrian in ascetism, Greek in the sciences, Indian in discernment, Ṣūfī in his way of life, ...."<sup>310</sup>

How could a group that so fiercely rejects sectarianism in all its forms be considered as following one faction regardless of which faction this might be! The Brethren write: "... our opinion and our doctrine engross all doctrines, and combine all sciences."<sup>311</sup>

Those who maintain that the Brethren were either Ismā'īlīs, Mu'tazilites or Ṣūfīs ignore the central message of their Epistles. The Brethren lived at a time that was plagued by sectarianism. Their Epistles reveal a primary concern: an ideal brotherly relationship that transcends all this partisanism. The very fact that the Epistles do convey Ṣūfī, Mu'tazilite and Ismā'īlī tendencies is itself indicative that they did not belong to any one of these movements. The Brethren recognize that people cannot but be different in their religions, beliefs, morals, intellectual abilities -- even in their miseries and joys. This, they believe, should make men accept these differences, learn to live with them and even benefit from them, instead of wasting their lifetime fighting.<sup>312</sup> In the light of this teaching that man should learn to cooperate with others of different views instead of trying to win them over to his own views, it seems highly probable that the Brethren included members with Ṣūfī tendencies, members with Mu'tazilite inclinations, some with Ismā'īlī sympathies and others fully committed to Greek philosophy. There is evidence of this diversity in their intellectual background which expresses itself in different parts of the work. To single out one of these

backgrounds and to interpret everything else so as to accord with it is methodologically wrong.

To be sure, the Brethren themselves were eclectic and proclaim themselves to be so. This, however, does not mean that we do not find in the Epistles a coherent, definite purpose. Despite their possible diverse affiliations, the Brethren were a group of learned men unified together with a single end in view. They wanted to find a way out of the political, economical and religious dilemma of their time. Their solution was to build up a structure of spiritual philosophy in which true salvation and real happiness are to be attained only in the hereafter. Imprisonment in the worldly phase is a transitional stage, which one should use to awaken his soul from foolish sleep by means of philosophical reflection. This is achieved only in a kind of spiritual city where fraternal love among its inhabitants transcends all other ties and where knowledge, like money and property, is exchanged among the fellow inhabitants, for this city is in preparation for the hereafter, where there is no place for ignorant souls. The society of the Brethren of Purity was intended as a demonstration of the spiritual city they aimed at. Their invitation to people to join them was primarily an invitation to this city of love and knowledge, and to discard hatred, envy and the sectarianism which stands in the way of the soul's attainment of perfection. This is because this sectarian strife deprives men of the time and peace needed to prepare the soul in this transitory imprisonment in human form for the world beyond. We will return to this in more detail when discussing their philosophical system in general.

## II The Problem of the Dating of the Epistles

The question of the date of the composition of the Epistles is largely intertwined with the question of authorship. Generally speaking, those who accept al-Tawhīdī's report, regardless of whether they consider the individuals named by him to be related to the Ismā'īlī movement or not, put the composition of the Epistles sometime in the fourth/tenth century.<sup>313</sup> As one would expect, those who rely entirely on the reports of the Ismā'īlī dā'īs, who ascribed the Epistles to a hidden imām of the Safr-period, consider the Epistles to be a pre-Fātimid work, particularly as belonging to the period of the caliph al-Ma'mūn.<sup>314</sup> But much of the scholarly argument about the dating of the Epistles is based, not on external reports, but mainly on internal evidence. Here, however, we encounter a wide range of different interpretations of this internal evidence. The result is disparity among the different theories of dating varying from the early second/eighth century<sup>315</sup> to the year 427/1036.<sup>316</sup> This, if anything, reflects the difficulties involved in any attempt at dating.

The first attempt to determine the date of the composition according to certain internal allusions comes from F. Dietrici. Although he based his conclusion on some external evidence,<sup>317</sup> he also took note of the verses by al-Mutanabbī (303-54/915-65) in the Epistles. He argued that their frequent occurrence in the text rules out the likelihood that they are later interpolations. Taking into account internal and external evidence, he fixed the date of the composition of the Epistles between 350-75/961-86.<sup>318</sup>

A few decades later, L. Massignon revived the issue, declaring that internal allusions to the date of composition should be the kind of evidence utilized to determine this date. In order to demonstrate his theory, he explored the anonymous verses of poetry in the text identifying one as belonging to Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896). Thus, he made Ibn al-Rūmī's date of death his terminus a quo. As for his terminus ad quem, he suggested the date of the death of al-Battānī (d. 317/929), whose definition of the trigonometrical sine was adopted by the Brethren.<sup>319</sup>

Many modern scholars have followed Massignon's recommendations. Thus, Y. Gumair maintains that his terminus a quo is the date of al-Mutanabbī's verses which appear in the Epistles. He fixes their date around 349/960. His terminus ad quem is 373/983, as he believes that both al-Tawhīdī's and al-Qifṭī's reports prove that the Epistles were completed and in circulation by that time.<sup>320</sup> Awa also utilizes al-Mutanabbī's verses for the purpose of dating. Of the various verses found in the Epistles, pre-Islamic, Umayyad and Abbasid, he believes those of al-Mutanabbī to be the latest. He believes that the composition of the Epistles must have started a few years after the recitation of this poem before Kafūr, the ruler of Egypt, in 349/960. He reasons that a reasonable span of time must have elapsed before these lines achieved publicity and attracted the attention of the Brethren. As for a terminus ad quem, he is reluctant to give any, finding it sufficient to say that the Brethren's period of activity was the fourth/tenth century.<sup>321</sup>

Other scholars, in their search for internal evidence for the dating of the Epistles, overlooked the question of verses and concentrated on interpreting

some obscure astronomical passages. The first to venture into this realm is P. Casanova. Making use of astronomical data that occurs in the forty-eighth epistle,<sup>322</sup> and of tables drawn by an astronomer, he observes that the Brethren were alluding to a conjunction which they expected to occur in 439/1047 and which would lead to an important event. This event is the recitation of the Khutbah in the name of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir which took place in Baghdād eleven years after the conjunction itself, that is, in 450/1058. But depending also on a collateral reference to the concealed imām whom the Brethren describe as being actually apparent (zahir),<sup>323</sup> and which Casanova believes to be an allusion to the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ẓahir (411-27/1020-1036), he fixes the date of the composition of the Epistles between 418-1027/427-1036.<sup>324</sup>

Although the dates fixed by Casanova are obviously incorrect, as we know from al-Tawḥidī's report that the Epistles were known in the 370's, the method itself proved appealing to more than one scholar. Thus, both Ṭibawī and J. 'Abd al-Nūr attempt to fix the date of the composition of the Epistles by interpreting a passage in which the Brethren refer to three different kinds of conjunction. The first is the "great conjunction" which occurs every 960 years and which indicates the rise of a new prophet. The second is the "middle conjunction" which occurs every 240 years and indicates the rise and fall of dynasties and the passing of rule from nation to nation. The third is the "small conjunction" that occurs every twenty years and indicates the change in prices and events.<sup>325</sup> Because the Brethren proclaimed that future events can be foretold by studying these three conjunctions, both Ṭibawī and 'Abd al-Nūr maintain that the Brethren



were presaging an important event, namely, the manifestation of their cause and the approach of the government of the righteous in place of the government of the evil. Assuming that the realm of evil which the Brethren were referring to is the Abbasid state and that the Brethren had in mind the middle conjunction (240 years), these two scholars conclude that this passage predicts that the Abbasids who came to power in 132 H. would cease to rule in 372 H.<sup>326</sup> Thus, according to Ṭibawī, this date must be very close to the date of the publication of the Epistles and, hence, it is his terminus ad quem.<sup>327</sup> As for ‘Abd al-Nūr, he believes that the composition of the Epistles must have been completed some time before that date in order to allow them to be published and to gain publicity before the actual occurrence of the event they were alluding to.<sup>328</sup>

Marquet, although considering the dates suggested by Casanova to be definitely erroneous, never questions the method itself. In fact, it seems that he actually believes that the Brethren were expecting a particular event, the date of which they tried to fix by methods of divination and astrology. He also believes that in the Epistles they furnished us with crucial information concerning this event and the conjunction which was to lead to it. Using the same passages previously interpreted by Casanova, Marquet, unlike him, concludes that the event alluded to by the Brethren is either the establishment of the Fāṭimids in Ifriqiyah (297/909) or the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt (358/969). According to him, the former date is more plausible. This is because, as he reads the text, some of the epistles speak of the imām as being in concealment and that his return to manifestation is close at hand. He, thus, concludes that the composition of the Epistles must

have started sometime before the proclamation of ‘Ubayd Allah al-Mahdī in Ifrīqiyah (297/909) and suggests the year 287/900 as his terminus a quo. Because he believes that the individuals mentioned by al-Tawḥidī in 373 H. had something to do with the authorship, and mainly because he believes that the Epistles underwent a process of drastic rearrangement, Marquet concludes that the Epistles were written over an extended period of time. He extends the time that elapsed between the beginning of the process of composition and its completion over almost eighty years, that is, between 287/900 and 367/980.<sup>329</sup>

Needless to say this theory, which depends for the fixing of the date of composition on the interpretation of some obscure astronomical passages in the Epistles, is hardly reliable. Even if Marquet's claim that the Brethren were predicting a certain event, the time of which they determined through astrological methods, is true, this cannot help us in fixing the date of composition. This is because all the scholars who resorted to this method depended on conjecture and on their own subjective way of reading the text. Suffice it to say that the disparity in dating between Marquet and Casanova, despite the fact that they use the same passages, indicates the hazard of depending on such a method in determining even an approximate date of composition.

Although Hījāb attacks such a method,<sup>330</sup> he, like Marquet, believes that a very long time must have elapsed between the beginning of the composition of the Epistles and their being put into a definitive form. But if Marquet spread the period of composition over eighty years, Hījāb stretched the period over almost two hundred years. He explicitly states that this theory will help accommodate

the different theories of authorship, as well as the different theories of dating.<sup>331</sup> Basing himself on the assumption that the Brethren were Shī'is and that the Epistles were particularly addressed to their dā'is, he reasons that the establishment of the society itself, the composition of the Epistles, their publication and their spread among the masses, especially in anti-Shī'i circles, must have required a long period of time. He thus concludes that the society of the Brethren of Purity was formed towards the end of the second/eighth century. At that time, he goes on, the process of composition could have started, but it developed only during the third/ninth century. This process was continued by several authors living at different times until the Epistles took their present form and probably their title around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.<sup>332</sup> It is clear that Hijāb's thesis is built on the assumption that the Brethren were Ismā'ilīs, an extremely doubtful proposition as we have tried to show. Thus, if the Epistles are not an Ismā'ilī work, it follows that they were not addressed to the Ismā'ilī dā'is.

Something further, however, has to be said about Hijāb's view that the Epistles were addressed to the Ismā'ilī dā'is. To begin with, the knowledge given to the dā'is is not of a kind that is intended to be widely read, as with the Epistles. The dā'is were indoctrinated with secret knowledge confined to the very few. Secondly, the dā'is are not novices and one suspects that they were seasoned ideologists, men mature in age. But the Epistles themselves are usually addressed to the "kind and compassionate brother." According to the Brethren's classification of their spiritual city the kind and compassionate brethren form the first category

of this city. They are between the ages of fifteen and thirty and are characterized by the ability to quickly accept the imaginative impressions and by a purity of soul which enables them to easily accept what is taught to them. They advise these kind and compassionate brethren to study the Epistles with other brethren who enjoy the same qualities so that with mutual help they will find a way to ascend to the highest stage of the spiritual city where they are delivered from the inferno of this world of generation/corruption.<sup>333</sup> If we also remember that the brethren believed that their message can be best accepted by the youth whose beliefs and opinions are not yet formed,<sup>334</sup> one can conclude that the Epistles were not addressed to Ismā'īlī, or any other, dā'is. They are addressed by the Brethren to their potential followers who want salvation through knowledge and who do not fanatically adhere to any one doctrine.<sup>335</sup> The Epistles appear to be the written version of the oral lectures given in the Brethren's meetings and were meant to be widely publicized for those who want to learn their kind of knowledge, yet, who are unable to attend their meetings.<sup>336</sup> This leaves Ḥijāb's claim that the dissemination of the Epistles in anti-Ismā'īlī circles must have required time not very comprehensive. Actually, the very fact that the Epistles were widely read in orthodox circles indicates, contrary to Ḥijāb's claim, that they were not considered to be an Ismā'īlī work in these circles. Admittedly, they were fiercely criticized in these circles, not, however, as a guide for the Ismā'īlī dā'is, but as a philosophically unorthodox work. As for his assumption that a long period of time was needed for the composition and publication of the Epistles, one has to consider the amazingly enormous literary output of medieval Islamic philosophers like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, to give two examples only, in

order to know that the Epistles, as great an effort as they might be, would not require two hundred years to be composed and published as Hijāb suggests.

In fact, although this theory held by Hijāb and Marquet which advocates a long period of composition by consecutive authors helps reconcile their belief that the Epistles belong to the Satr-period with the internal allusions to a much later period, it remains implausible in view of two related facts. The first pertains to the conceptual structure of the Epistles. To be sure, the Epistles are not free from discrepancies. But, as will be shown when discussing their philosophy, they, nonetheless, exhibit a structure of thought that is remarkable for its cohesion. It is not the kind of work written by consecutive authors over a long period of time. Secondly, there is great uniformity of literary style, vocabulary and phraseology. What is quite striking about the Epistles is the facility with which philosophical ideas are expressed in a language which has become almost a natural idiom. We are not reading the ninth century al-Kindī (d. ca. 246/860) who, almost single-handedly, was forging an Arabic philosophical vocabulary. We are rather dealing with a text whose philosophical vocabulary has undergone a long process of development and has become largely standardized.

Another attempt at reconciling the supposedly Ismā'īlī identity of the Epistles with al-Tawhīdī's report is offered by al-ʿAbd. He maintains that one ought to distinguish between the date of the establishment of the society of the Brethren and the date of the composition of the Epistles. He, thus, suggests that the formation of the society of the Brethren goes back to the period of Jaʿfar al-Šadiq, held by many to be the initiator of the concept of taqiya

which, according to our author, is practised by the Brethren. The Epistles themselves, he goes on, were composed by the same individuals to whom al-Tawhīdī ascribed their composition. But al-‘Abd argues that these persons are but late members of the ancient society.<sup>337</sup> Original as this theory might be, there is really no evidence to support it.

Hamdani rejects the theory of an exceptionally long period of composition.<sup>338</sup> He believes that the whole work was composed in a relatively short period by a board of authors writing at the same time under the supervision of an editor, acting as the coordinator of the group.<sup>339</sup> Since he holds that the Epistles are an Ismā‘ilī work of the Satr-period, he maintains that the whole work is pre-Fātimid. He placed its composition between 260-297/873-909, suggesting that the composition is closer to the later date. The first date denotes the disappearance of the last imām of the twelvers, the second the establishment of Fātimids in Ifriqiyah.<sup>340</sup> To justify his choice of this particular period, he observes that historically this period is characterized by strong messianic expectations among the Shī‘is in general, particularly after the disappearance of the twelvers’ imām. In addition to this, he goes on, it is characterized by the prevalence of revolutionary feelings aimed at the destruction of the Abbasids and the establishment of a caliphate that can rival them.<sup>341</sup> Because the time of the imām Aḥmad, whom he believes to be the issuer of the Epistles, coincides with the disappearance of the twelvers’ imām, and because, according to his own way of reading the text, one can sense a pattern of a building-up of expectations throughout the Epistles, he concludes that the Epistles were written during this

particular period. The Brethren, according to Hamdani, were making use of the prevalent messianic and revolutionary atmosphere to declare good tidings for the near appearance of the imām and the destruction of the Abbasids.<sup>342</sup> In order to give credence to his thesis, he first of all tried to prove that internal references to a later period are mere editorial interpolations; then he goes on to present what he considers to be external textual evidence which points to the same period of composition fixed by him.

To turn first to his argument concerning the internal allusions to a later date, one should start by examining the fragments of poetry. The Epistles are overladen with verses of poetry that are usually cited anonymously.<sup>343</sup> The only poets that are referred to by name happen to be very early ones either of the pre-Islamic or the Umayyad period.<sup>344</sup> Nevertheless, more recent poets of the medieval period have been identified by modern scholars. Three lines that are cited in two places are identified by Massignon as belonging to Ibn al-Rūmī (221-83/835-96).<sup>345</sup> Two Persian lines have been referred to by Hamdani as being attributed by Saʿid Nafisī to Rudakī (d. 329/940).<sup>346</sup> It is established that al-Mutanabbī's lines are taken from a poem recited in front of the Ikhshidite ruler of Egypt, al-Kāfūr, in 349/960.<sup>347</sup> Ṭibāwī has identified one line that appears in two different places as belonging to Abu al-Faḥ al-Buṣṭī (d. 401/1010).<sup>348</sup> From among these relatively late verses, Hamdani accepts as authentic only those attributed to Ibn al-Rūmī and to Rūdakī. As he explicitly puts it, the dates of these verses accord well with his theory that the Epistles were composed between 260-297/873-909.<sup>349</sup> But one can answer that the existence of verses that belong

to the third/ninth century in the Epistles does not necessarily mean that the latter were written at that time. They could have been written later, in the fourth/tenth century and included poems composed in earlier times. But the converse does not hold. This is why Hamdani has to maintain that the verses of both al-Mutanabbī and al-Buṣṭī are editorial interpolations. In order to prove his point, he argues that al-Buṣṭī's verses are not to be found in either place in two manuscripts of the Epistles: a Tehran manuscript dated 686/1287 and an Istanbul manuscript dated 800/1400.<sup>350</sup> Because the verses of al-Mutanabbī are usually memorable, he goes on, a copyist must have written some of these verses in the margin to support the relevant argument in the text and a later copyist could have introduced this marginal note into the text.<sup>351</sup> He argues that the suspicion of later interpolation in these two cases is supported by the fact that three verses in another place of the Epistles are introduced by the expression "as the editor has said in verse" (kama qāl al-muhagiq shi'ran) which he, following Ṭibāwī, believes to be a clear confession of editorial interference.<sup>352</sup>

To start by examining Hamdani's argument against al-Buṣṭī's line, one should note that the two manuscripts he is using to support his claim of later interpolation are relatively late manuscripts. The omission of verses from some manuscripts does not certainly prove that an editorial interpolation did take place as long as they do exist in other manuscripts. It might be important to refer here to the fact that Awa mentions that he compared the fragments of poetry that exist in the Cairo published edition with those present in some of the manuscripts of the Epistles in the B.N. and found that they are identical.<sup>353</sup>



It follows that the possibility exists that editorial change could have affected the two manuscripts used by Hamdani, and not the converse; that is, that al-Buṣṭī's lines are an integral part of the original work and were omitted in the two later manuscripts. As for al-Mutanabbī's verses, obviously because Hamdani found that they do exist in the manuscripts he checked, he assumed that they could not be an integral part of the original text, but were interpolated in later manuscripts. Needless to say that this argument depends on a mere assumption that cannot be proven. The supportive argument which he brought to strengthen the possibility of interpolation in the cases of al-Mutanabbī's and al-Buṣṭī's verses, namely that the expression "as the editor has said in verse" introduces some other verses in the Epistles, is quite erroneous. Hamdani, following Ṭibāwī, erred in translating the term muhaqqiq as editor. By examining the text surrounding the verses, as well as the passage introducing them, we discover that the term al-muhaqqiq is used to designate the mystic who lives the experience of actually seeing God.<sup>354</sup> The whole epistle in which these verses and the expression appear is entitled, On the Essence of Faith and the Character of True Believers (fi māhiyat al-imān wa khiṣāl al-mu'minīn al-muhaqqiqīn).<sup>355</sup> The chapter of this epistle in which the expression appears starts with the words "one of the signs of the true believers" (wa min 'alāmāt al-mu'minīn al-muhaqqiqīn),<sup>356</sup> a few lines after which the expression "as the [muhaqqiq] has said in verse" comes. It is obvious that the term al-muhaqqiq here is derived from the term al-haqqiqah as it is mentioned in the same passage that al-muhaqqiq is the one who sees God bi 'ayn al-haqqiqah.<sup>357</sup>

Although this can help show that the use of expressions like "as it is said" (kamā qīlah) or "as the sayer said" (kamā qāl al-qā'il) does not necessarily indicate editorial interpolations, this is not to deny that scribal changes actually plague the Epistles. As Diwald observes, the earliest known manuscript of the Epistles is Istanbul, Atif 1681 dated 587/1182.<sup>358</sup> This represents a lapse of more than two hundred years relative to al-Tawhīdī's report and a greater lapse if we accept Hamdani's dates. But if one accepts that scribal changes could have occurred during this period and after it, from one manuscript to another, one ought to consider that all verses stand an equal chance of being interpolated. Thus, Hamdani's acceptance of Ibn al-Rūmī's and Rūdakī's verses and his rejection of al-Buṣṭī's and al-Mutanabbī's is quite arbitrary.

Another allusion in the Epistles to a late date of composition comes in the reference to the Ash'arites.<sup>359</sup> Marquet observes that Ash'arism, as a movement, could not have existed until several years after al-Ash'arī left the ranks of the Mu'tazilah in 300/913 if not after his death (260-323/874-935).<sup>360</sup> Hamdani, realizing the implications of this fact, considers the whole passage in which the Ash'arites, along with other groups, were denounced as a later interpolation. He bases this on the assumption that all the groups criticized in this passage, namely the Nawāṣib, Rawafid, Jabriyyah, Qadariyyah, Khawārij and Ashā'irah, indicate that the authors of the Epistles are traditionists, more likely, Ḥanbalites. But taking into account the liberal thrust of the Epistles, he goes on, this passage must definitely be unauthentic.<sup>361</sup> In fact, an examination of the context in which this denunciation comes reveals that other factions in other

religions, namely Judaism and Christianity, are also attacked. It follows that to single out the attack on the Islamic factions and to claim that it indicates a Hanbali attitude is quite erroneous. It is obvious that the denunciation of these groups is in complete accord with the Brethren's fierce and persistent rejection of sectarianism in general. At any rate, Hamdani himself later revised his opinion and considered the passage to be an integral part of the original text. Nevertheless, he still observes that the term "ashā'irah" itself is interpolated on the grounds that it does not contrast properly with the term "khawārij" as nawāṣib and rawāfid and jabriyyah and qadariyyah do. Consulting four different manuscripts of the Epistles, he found that the term ashā'irah never appeared in any of them.<sup>362</sup> Again, the same argument regarding the verses of poetry where reliance on some manuscripts, particularly late manuscripts, is methodologically unsound applies here. Indeed, this is even more serious in the present case because the earliest manuscript Hamdani is using to check the occurrence of the term ashā'irah is dated 1020/1611. In this B.N.'s manuscript, the expression "al-khawārij wa al-Ashā'irah" appears as "al-murji'ah" only without the inclusion of any other group. In another Paris manuscript dated 1065/1654 the reading is "al-khawārij" again without the reference to any other group. In a British Library manuscript, as well as a third Paris manuscript dated 1153/1740 the expression appears as "al-murji'ah wa al-khawārij." If this proves anything, it would be the deterioration that plagues late manuscripts; hence the unreliability of depending entirely on them to determine the interpolations in question. For how could the word "murji'ah" that appears in the earliest of the four manuscripts used, appear as "al-khawārij" in another, then, in the latest

of the three, both expressions appear side by side? And what about earlier manuscripts: how does this passage appear in them? Hamdani assumes that the term ashā'irah was a mistaken reading in the manuscript used for the Bombay edition that was repeated in both the Cairo and Beirut editions.<sup>363</sup> Apparently, he is implying that the term ashā'irah never existed in any manuscript. But this implication is not justified without critical study that compares early manuscripts with the late ones. But without the availability of any manuscript earlier than 587/11<sup>o</sup>1, two centuries after the Epistles were composed, it is almost impossible to try to prove anything definite using the addition or omission of a word, an expression or a verse. There are, however, other internal clues that can help us determine the period of composition.

In our judgment, one of the most telling clues is a listing in the Epistles of the qualities of the ideal ruler. The number of the qualities is the same as the number which appears in Kitāb Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Fādilah (The Book of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City: hereafter cited as the Virtuous City) written by al-Fārābī, who died in 339/950, towards the end of his life.<sup>364</sup> What is equally striking is the wording of these qualities in the Epistles. It is almost identical with al-Fārābī's wording, so much so, that S. Pines accused the Brethren of plagiarism.<sup>365</sup> Marquet, on the other hand, speaks of the possibility of a common oral source.<sup>366</sup> This reference to an oral source, as well as Pines' accusation of the Brethren, means that the Brethren were either contemporaries of al-Fārābī or came after him.

It is in all probability this inclination that prompted Hamdani to argue for a common source, written, however, not oral, namely, the Arabic translation made by Hunain ibn Ishāq (194-264/809-877) of a "commentary" on Plato's Republic.<sup>367</sup> In fact this theory could have been quite plausible, but for one serious difficulty. The qualities enumerated in Plato's Republic are ten and not twelve as they appear in the Virtuous City and the Epistles. The two qualities of eloquence and physical fitness are not Platonic but a Farabian addition.<sup>368</sup> They are missing from al-Fārābī's Tahsīl al-Sa'ādah (The Attainment of Happiness: hereafter cited as the Attainment) where he introduces the qualities of the ideal ruler by saying that these are to be found in Plato's Republic.<sup>369</sup> Yet, the ten qualities, with the addition of the two missing from the Republic, are to be found in al-Fārābī's Virtuous City where he is presenting his own philosophy.<sup>370</sup> If the Brethren were using Hunain's translation, how would they come to add two qualities which happen to be the same two which al-Fārābī added to those of Plato, even using the same words and order? Hamdani himself admits that the qualities listed in the commentary on Plato's Republic vary in order and wording from those listed in the Virtuous City and the Epistles.<sup>371</sup> All this indicates that the Brethren took these qualities directly from the Virtuous City.

It is true that the Brethren do not mention al-Fārābī.<sup>372</sup> But it has to be noted here that they seldom mention any Islamic philosopher by name.<sup>373</sup> Moreover, quoting from others without giving the source was a common practice. The most pertinent example is that of al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956). Al-Mas'ūdī in his al-Tanbih wa al-Ishrāf quotes at great length from the list of contents of the

Virtuous City without once mentioning al-Fārābī as its author.<sup>374</sup> This is not to say that he does not know al-Fārābī because in another section of the same book he mentions al-Fārābī and his date of death.<sup>375</sup> What this indicates is that this work of al-Fārābī's was fairly well-known among tenth century intellectuals, not necessarily only among philosophers.

It should also be stressed that in al-Fārābī's work the description of the qualities of the ideal ruler form an integral part of his political theory that is carefully worked out within his metaphysical system. In the Epistles, there is no integration of argument. Thus, whatever theory one advances to explain the presence of this description in both works, it cannot really be said that al-Fārābī borrowed it from the Brethren.

We must now turn to Hamdani's attempt to prove his theory of dating by invoking what he claims to be external textual evidence. In this connection, it should be noted that one of the strongest arguments against the theory of an early date for the composition of the Epistles is that pre-Fāṭimid, but more significantly early Fāṭimid, sources are devoid of any reference to the Epistles. To counteract this argument, Hamdani introduces what he claims to be two pieces of textual evidence that prove the reliability of his suggested date of composition, namely 260-297/873-909. The first, he maintains, occurs in a manuscript of the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, namely al-Risālah al-Wahīdah fī Tathbīt Arkān al-ʿAqīdah (hereafter cited as al-Wahīdah) of the Yemeni Ṭaiybi dāʿī Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd (d. 667/1268).<sup>376</sup> The second is included in the Pseudo-Majrīṭī book Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm wa Aḥaq al-Natījatayn bī al-Taqdīm

(hereafter cited as Ghāyat al-Hakīm) written between 343-348/954-960.<sup>377</sup>

To take Hamdani's argument regarding al-Wahīdah first, he observes that dā'ī al-Walīd used to quote from other sources. According to Hamdani, one of these quotations was extracted from the lost book, Sīrat Ibn-Hawshab (hereafter cited as the Sīrah), of the dā'ī Ja'far ibn Maṣṣūr al-Yaman whose long life witnessed the coming of the Fāṭimids to power and their first four caliphs. This passage from the Sīrah quoted in al-Wahīdah, he goes on, explicitly states the names of the hidden imāms of the early Satr-period and ascribes the issuing of the Epistles to one of them, namely imām Aḥmad.<sup>378</sup> Hamdani's implication is not only that the authorship of the Epistles had been attributed to imām Aḥmad in early Fāṭimid literature, but mainly that the period of composition fixed by him (260-297/873-909) is supported by the very fact that reference to the Epistles as being composed in the Satr-period (pre-Fāṭimid period) exists in a source whose author lived between 270-360/883-970, that is, very close to the supposed time of composition.<sup>379</sup>

It is extremely curious that no Ismā'īlī scholar had made use of this "information" previously. H. Hamdani, in particular, studied this same manuscript without deriving the same conclusion from it.<sup>380</sup> Stern drew attention to this fact. A. Hamdani answered that H. Hamdani was not aware that the passage in question is a direct quotation from the Sīrah and thought it to be the report of the late dā'ī, Ibn al-Walīd, but "on the authority of Dā'ī Ja'far."<sup>381</sup> But if H. Hamdani was certain that the passage in al-Wahīdah referring to the Epistles was given on the authority of the Sīrah, whether directly or indirectly, why

is it that he would still refrain from using it? This suggests that H. Hamdani had very good reasons to believe that the passage in question is not extracted from the Sirah, either directly or indirectly, but is the report of the late dā'ī himself and not on the authority of dā'ī Ja'far. On our reading of the text we ourselves think that there are very good reasons to believe that that quotation is not from the Sirah. But before turning to the text itself and Hamdani's translation of it, there are other historical factors that have to be taken into account.

Stern has pointed out that the names of the imāms of the early Satr-period were not revealed until the late fourth/tenth century.<sup>382</sup> Dā'ī Ja'far himself includes in his book entitled Kitāb al-Fārā'id wa Hudūd al-Dīn a letter from the Fātimid caliph al-Mahdī (308-322/920-934) where he traces his genealogy to Abdullah ibn Ja'far al-Šādiq and not to his brother Ismā'īl. What is significant in this is that the names of the hidden imāms mentioned are not the same ones mentioned in al-Wahīdah in the passage that is supposedly from the Sirah.<sup>383</sup> This is because it is only later, but still during Ja'far's lifetime, that the Fātimids officially adopted the theory that they are descendants, in direct line, from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far al-Šādiq, followed by the three hidden imāms named in al-Wahīdah. However, it has to be noted that the names of these three hidden imāms were not revealed during dā'ī Ja'far's period.<sup>384</sup> One should note that the caliph al-Mu'izz (341-365/953-975), during whose caliphate dā'ī Ja'far died, sent a letter to the Sind community stressing his Ismā'īlī lineage, but never mentioned the names of these three hidden imāms.<sup>385</sup> Dā'ī Ja'far himself in a



later book, Kitāb al-Adilah wa al-Shawāhid, abandoned the earlier theory of genealogy contained in Kitāb al-Farā'id and adopted the official theory of the imamate of Ismā'il and his descendants.<sup>386</sup> However, apparently in order to abide by the official stand of the Fātimid caliphs whom he was serving as one of the highly ranked dā'īs of their central da'wa, he did not mention the names of the hidden imāms. (No mention of the Epistles, it has to be noted, occurs in either of dā'ī Ja'far's books.) Later on, al-Naisabūrī in his book Istitār al-Imām, written during the caliphate of al-'Aziz (365-386/975-996), did mention their names. However, although this author gave an account of the activities of these hidden imāms, he did not relate the Epistles to any of them.<sup>387</sup> Another interesting circumstance is that at least three late Ismā'ilī works quoted the Sīrah, one of them quoting the same passage, without including the supposed statement of dā'ī Ja'far naming the hidden imāms and ascribing the Epistles to one of them.<sup>388</sup>

We must now turn to the document al-Wahīdah itself, more specifically to the way Hamdani translates certain conditional particles, transforming them as adverbials, introducing categorical statements about the past. Hamdani, quite sensibly, in his translation divides the relevant parts of the document into three paragraphs.<sup>389</sup> The main argument of the first two paragraphs is to show that the imām's concealment does not mean the ceasing of his mission, that the dā'īs continue it. The first paragraph includes a quotation from the Epistles, the second a quotation from the Sīrah. The third paragraph constitutes the controversial passage which Hamdani interprets as a continuation of the quotation from the

Sīrah, basing it, no doubt, on the concluding statement: "These are the words of [Dā'ī Ja'far], may God sanctify his soul."<sup>390</sup>

Hamdani's translation of the first paragraph begins as follows:

"Know, O brother, that when the concealment (ihṭiṣāb) of al-Maqām (the Imām) -- May peace be on him -- occurred [concealing him] from the sight of the observers, his substance [i.e. guidance] was not cut off from his dā'is [hudūd dīnihi], ...."<sup>391</sup>

The fourth word in this passage, "when", is Hamdani's translation of the conditional particle "if". In other words, the conditional "when" or "if" is transformed quite illegitimately into an adverb, rendering the statement a categorical statement about the past, and hence referring to the pre-Fāṭimid Saṭr-period. But this is not what the text is saying. The discussion is quite theoretical and makes no specific reference to the early Saṭr-period.

We meet this phenomenon once again in the second paragraph, in the quotation from the Sīrah. But the introduction to this quotation is quite important. It reads in Hamdani's translation as follows:

[This is also supported] by what has come to us from Sayyidnā Ḥa'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman -- may God sanctify his soul -- in his book, the biography of his father [i.e. Sīrat Ibn Ḥawṣab]. Probably he bestowed [this knowledge] for our time [also] and hinted to our Imām -- may the blessings of God be on him -- because after his [i.e. Dā'ī Ḥa'far's] words, none of the Imāms disappeared except our Lord -- may peace be on him. He [Ḥa'far] said: "When the concealment of the Imām occurred, his Da'wa was not discontinued even in a single sector of the Earth. ...."<sup>392</sup>

In this translation we notice in the second sentence the insertion by Hamdani of the word "also" in square brackets. This is totally unjustified and is forcing an interpretation on the text that has no basis. For it is obvious that dā'ī Ibn al-Walīd is puzzled by the fact that the Sīrah is discussing the concealment of the imāms although it was written in a kashf period. He, thus, suggests the possibility that it is a prediction of the satr of imām al-Ṭayyīb to come.<sup>393</sup> That the quotation, again, is totally theoretical can be seen from the conditional idhā in the last sentence of the above quotation, which Hamdani again translates as an adverbial "when" referring to the past events of the satr. The translated sentence "when the concealment of the Imām occurred" is simply a mistranslation of "wa idhā waqa'ā istitār al-imām" which should be translated as "if the concealment of the imām takes place." Thus, here again it can be seen that the discussion is quite theoretical and is not making any reference to past events.

This is precisely the reason why ibn al-Walīd is puzzled by the discussion of the Satr-period in the Sīrah and suggests that it might be hinting at the future concealment of imām al-Ṭayyīb. For if the discussion in the Sīrah was not theoretical and if the passage pointing to the first Satr-period and its imāms was an integral part of the Sīrah used by ibn al-Walīd, he would not have resorted to the supposition that dā'ī Ja'far, when discussing the situation of the da'wah under a hidden imām, was hinting at the coming Satr-period. With this as a background, we come to the controversial passage which simply does not fit in:

"‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad b. Ismā‘il was concealed -- may the peace of God be on all of them -- until his Šī‘a and his dā‘īs lost contact with him. ... till his (i.e. ‘Abd Allāh’s) son Aḥmad arose (i.e. became the Imām). He was also not recognized. He went through many a difficulty and fear and the destruction of his family, whose description cannot be lengthier, until he issued (anṣa‘a) the Rasā’il ...."<sup>394</sup>

Among other things, this passage is not intended to illustrate how the dā‘īs continue the mission when the imām is in concealment but is simply an ad hoc statement about the difficulties of the imāms in their concealment and a pointed reference to the Epistles as being initiated by imām Aḥmad. It is difficult to see how this could be part of the original Sīrah. The only plausible explanation is that this passage was added to the Sīrah by a later Ismā‘ilī copyist, that is, after the names of the hidden imāms of the first Satr-period were disclosed and the attribution of the Epistles to one of them became a common belief among the Ismā‘ilīs. It has to be taken into consideration here that we are dealing with second-hand testimony, the Sīrah itself not being available. The book is lost and only parts of it are preserved in the form of very few citations in relatively late sources, the earliest of which is a mid-sixth/twelfth century work, that is, two centuries after the Sīrah was written. The fact that a work quotes the same passage from the Sīrah, but without the last controversial section, is itself quite telling. All indications point to the spuriousness of this passage. No wonder H. Hamdani ignored it.

The second piece of textual evidence which Hamdani presents to support his theory of early dating is the Pseudo-Majrīṭī book Ghāyat al-Hakīm. Following

Diwald,<sup>395</sup> Hamdani observes that references to and quotations from the Epistles are to be found in this book written, according to its anonymous author, between 343-348/954-960.<sup>396</sup> Consequently, Hamdani argues, this must establish a terminus ad quem earlier than the one established by al-Tawhīdī's report.<sup>397</sup> If one accepts the date of composition of Ghayat al-Hakīm given in its introduction, one can still argue against Hamdani's theory.<sup>398</sup> Hamdani, as well as Diwald, apparently bases his argument on the supposition that the similarity between some parts of Ghāyat al-Hakīm and the Epistles certainly means that the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm was making use of the Epistles. It follows that the Epistles must have been completed sometime before 343-348/954-960, the period of composition of Ghāyat al-Hakīm. But the opposite is not at all improbable. The possibility is there that the authors of the Epistles started writing after 348/960 and thus had at hand an edition of the complete Ghāyat al-Hakīm and repeatedly used it, especially in their fifty-second epistle. In fact, an examination of Ghāyat al-Hakīm and the Epistles provides us with important clues to prove the soundness of this thesis.

The book Ghāyat al-Hakīm is mainly about magic, especially the empirical aspect of it. Contrary to what Ritter claims, one cannot find identical pages in both the Epistles and Ghāyat al-Hakīm.<sup>399</sup> What one can find there is simply the borrowing of some ideas and the similarity, not identicalness, of a few pages of Ghāyat al-Hakīm and the fifty-second epistle on magic. Now, the Brethren, who were known to be eclectic, explicitly mention more than once in this fifty-second epistle that they returned for the information included in it, especially

in its empirical aspect, to the books of early wise men.<sup>400</sup> The thesis which advocates that the Brethren came after the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm or were, at best, his contemporaries can be further supported by the fact that the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm mentions in this book that he has another book entitled Kitāb al-Tārīkh.<sup>401</sup> The Brethren gave a story in the Epistles and referred the reader to a certain Kitāb al-Tārīkh where one can find this story.<sup>402</sup> Now, according to Hamdani, the Epistles were written between 260-297/873-909, that is, about fifty years before the time the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm must have been active. These dates would make it highly unlikely that his other book, Kitāb al-Tārīkh, was in circulation fifty years earlier, that is, around 260-297/873-909, for the Brethren to refer to it. It follows that the authors of the Epistles were most probably contemporaries of the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm, if not after him.

The fact that the Brethren never referred to the book Ghāyat al-Hakīm in the Epistles is not peculiar as it was their custom to make use of others' books and theories without mentioning them by name. But the converse is not true. Although the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm was also eclectic, he usually refers to his sources by name of author and even by title of book. Thus, reference was given to al-Kindī and his epistle about the time left for the Arab state,<sup>403</sup> to al-Fārābī and one of his articles,<sup>404</sup> to Ibn Waḥshiyyah,<sup>405</sup> to al-Ṭabarī, the astronomer<sup>406</sup> and even to fairly known figures like Ja'far al-Baṣrī and his book Kitāb al-Makhzūn,<sup>407</sup> to mention only a few examples. No reference at all was given either to the Brethren or to the Epistles throughout the whole work.

In the light of this, one can conclude that the author of Ghāyat al-Hakīm did not know either the Brethren or their Epistles, because if he did know them he would have referred to them especially since the whole theme of his book is similar to their fifty-second epistle. Thus, the only possible explanation for the existence of similar ideas and papers in Ghāyat al-Hakīm and the Epistles is that the Brethren were the ones that were making use of Ghāyat al-Hakīm and not the other way around. It follows that the Brethren wrote their Epistles sometime after the completion of Ghāyat al-Hakīm in 348/960.

In the light of the previous discussions, if, for the sake of argument one accepts that the internal allusions to the Ash'arites, who appeared after 300/913, and the inclusion of late verses like al-Mutanabbī's dated 349/960 are later interpolations, the quoting at length from the Virtuous City written in the thirties of the fourth/fourties of the tenth century and the extended borrowing from Ghāyat al-Hakīm written between 343-348/954-959 cannot but be accepted as authentic.

In conclusion, the only positive and explicit external evidence pointing to the dating of the Epistles is that of al-Tawhīdī. Most of the scholars accepted it and depended on it. The authenticity of other textual evidence has been shown to be doubtful. Moreover, internal evidence from the Epistles corroborates al-Tawhīdī's statement concerning the date of the composition. In view of this one must accept al-Tawhīdī's report to fix the date of the composition of the Epistles.

Because it can be derived from al-Tawhīdī's report that the Epistles were almost completed in the early seventies of the fourth/eighties of the tenth century,

and because the Brethren made extensive use in the Epistles of two books written in the thirties and forties of the fourth/fourties and fifties of the tenth century, one can conclude that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity were written in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, most probably between 350-375/961-985.

A symbolic story in the Epistles relates that the Brethren's spiritual beliefs and desire for salvation started as a dream in the mind of one person who disclosed it to a friend. They then decided that in order to make this dream come true they had to seek the support of as many brethren as they could. This is because by combining the good will of many individuals they would be able to shorten the time and effort needed to build their ship of salvation.<sup>408</sup> External reports explored in this chapter help us determine that the founder of the society was al-Maqdisī and that the friend whom he trusted with his thoughts was al-Zanjānī, for they appear in these reports as the two most prominent figures of the society. Most probably, they started writing and releasing the epistles as they believed it to be a suitable way of addressing and recruiting potential followers.<sup>409</sup> Since al-Maqdisī was singled out as the founder of the society, it is highly probable that many of the Epistles, especially in the early period of composition, were written solely by him. This explains the lapses into the first person singular one encounters in the Epistles. It also explains why he was considered by al-Tawhīdī and al-Manṭiqī as the spokesman of the group, and as the one responsible for the ideas expressed in the Epistles and why the Epistles were related to him. At the same time, it seems that they started contacting promising figures on an individual basis. Al-Mihrajānī was, most probably, recruited in this way.



His date of death in 403/1012 means, most probably, that during the fifties or sixties of the fourth century he would have been in the age group from which the Brethren were recruiting potential followers. But, it seems that the Brethren failed to gain a considerable number of followers. Those recruited by personal contact must have been very few indeed, a fact that can be ascertained from the actual names of the Brethren given in the sources. As for those whom they succeeded in winning to the cause through the Epistles, it can be ascertained from public reaction to the Epistles that they must have been very few. It is obvious that the Brethren's message of salvation through fraternal love was overshadowed by their ideas concerning the role of philosophy and sharī'ah which raised suspicions about their intentions. Ironically, it is clear from the Epistles that their fear of public reaction to their ideas about the sources of true knowledge was the main reason why they hid their identity and decided to reveal it only to those who proved themselves worthy of disclosing this secret, namely, those who read their Epistles, believed in their cause and, hence, sought them out in order to learn from them. It is only an arch seeker of knowledge and a true believer in the cause of the Brethren who would try to reach them whatever the obstacles were.<sup>410</sup>

Their failure in spreading their message and in gaining followers can be inferred from the fact that after the deaths of the main members, following each other towards the end of the fourth century and in the early fifth century, the Epistles were unheard of until some one hundred years later, when the Nizārī branch of the Ismā'īlī da'wah revived them. Most probably, the pattern of the

building up of expectations for an imminent salvation from the earthly inferno which one can find in the Epistles, proved to be quite appealing to the Ismā'īlīs after the fall of the Fāṭimids. Thus, they were tempted to interpret the Brethren's spiritual call as if it were a political one.

## ENDNOTES

1. G. Flügel, "Über Inhalt und Verfasser der Arabischen Encyclopädie [*Rasā'il lkhwān al-Ṣafā wa Khillān al-Wafā*] die Abhandlungen der Aufrichtigen Brüder und Treuen Freunde," *ZDMG* 13 (1859):24 (hereafter cited as "Inhalt"), citing Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, *Vienna MS*, no. 395, fol. 123r.
2. *Ibid.*; Badr al-Dīn Abī 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ḥanbalī [Ibn Taymiyah], *Mukhtasar Fatāwā ibn Taymiyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Majīd Salīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1985), p. 156.
3. Flügel, "Inhalt," p. 23, citing al-Ṣafadī, *Vienna MS*.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Al-Qiftī, *Tārīkh*, p. 82.
6. See pp. 254ff. below.
7. This is implied in a *fatwah* about the Nuṣairis given by Ibn Taymiyah where he relates the Brethren to this group. See Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn 'Abd al-Salām ibn Taymiyah, *Majmū' Rasā'il* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Husayniyah, 1323 H.), p. 98.

Awa, however, remarks that this relation of the Brethren to the Nuṣairis is never encountered in any other early report. He also refers to Ibn Ḥajjar al-'Asqalānī's statement (reported by al-Muḥhibī) that Ibn Taymiyah tends to exaggerate and that one should not accept all his sayings. See Awa, *L'Esprit*, pp. 46-47. See also, Muḥammad al-Muḥhibī, *Khulāṣat al-Athar fī A'yān al-Qarn al-Hādī 'Ashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Wahbiyyah, 1284 H.), 4:8 (hereafter cited as *Khulāṣat*).

It might be relevant to mention here that al-'Abd observes that the term "Brethren of Purity" is used among the Nuṣairis and can be found in their writings. See Al-'Abd, *al-Insān*, p. 29.

8. See pp. 236ff. below.
9. See pp. 230ff. below.
10. Flügel, "Inhalt," p. 23, citing al-Şafadī, Vienna MS. Note that A. Hamdani mentions on the authority of Louis Massignon that Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270) believed that al-Ghazālī's ideas are derived mainly from the Epistles of the Brethren and thus, he continues, his ideas are weak like their source. See Abbas Hamdani, "Shades of Shī'ism in the Tracts of the Brethren of Purity," in Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe with Maurice Boutin and Harold Coward, eds., Traditions in Contact and Change: Selected Proceedings of the XIVth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), p. 448 (hereafter cited as "Shades").
11. Flügel, "Inhalt," p. 23, citing al-Şafadī, Vienna MS.
12. Nu'mān Khayr al-Dīn al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī, Jalā' al-'Aynayn fī Muhākamat al-Ahmadayn (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Miṣriyyah, 1298 H.), p. 86 (hereafter cited as Jalā').
13. Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 31.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 33.
16. Ibid., p. 25, n. 1.
17. Ibid.
18. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Philosophy and Cosmology," in R.N. Frye, ed., The Cambridge History of Iran, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4:428.
19. Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 37.
20. See A.L. Tibawi, "The Idea of Guidance in Islam, From an Educational Point of View," IQ 3 (July 1956):147, where he states that the Epistles were used

as one of the Fatimid tools of propaganda, and p. 148, where he mentions that the Brethren of Purity symbolize the Shī'ī attempt at a synthesis while al-Ghazālī represents the Sunnī attempt in this regard. See also, A.L. Tibawi, "Further Studies on Ikhwān al-Ṣafā," IQ 22 (September 1978):59, where he mentions that the triumph of Shī'ism in the cultural field was marked by the establishment of al-Azhar in Cairo and the dissemination of the Epistles in Baghdād.

21. Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, p. 5.
22. Diwald, Arabische Philosophie, p. 22.
23. Ibid., p. 27.
24. Ibid., pp. 26, 27.
25. RIS, 1:21.
26. RIS, 1:357-61, 381-82.
27. RIS, 1:240-41.
28. RIS, 2:376.
29. RIS, 2:444; RJ, 1:104-05.
30. RIS, 2:125.
31. RIS, 2:359-60.
32. See, for example, RIS, 1:358-59; 2:22-23, 59.
33. RIS, 3:57-58.
34. RIS, 2:287-88.
35. RIS, 2:59.
36. al-Qiftī, Tarīkh, p. 82.
37. Nasr mistakenly attributes to al-Qiftī the view that the Brethren were Mu'tazilites. Al-Qiftī is only reporting this attribution as one of the many current theories about the identity of the Brethren. See Nasr, Cosmological

- Doctrines, p. 26; al-Qiftī, Tārīkh, p. 82.
38. E.G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, 4 vols. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902-30), 1:292.
  39. M. Asin Palacios, El Original Arabe de la Disputa del Asno Contra Fr. Anselmo Turmeda, cited by Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 28; Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 179.
  40. Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 48-49.
  41. S.M. Stern, "New Information about the Authors of the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren," IS 3 (1964):419 (hereafter cited as "New Information").
  42. *Ibid.*; Goodman, The Case, p. 37.
  43. Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 28.
  44. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 179.
  45. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 30-31.
  46. Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, p. 5.
  47. RIS, 2:367. This comes in a passage that attacks kalām in general, enumerating some of its exponents, including the Mu'tazilah. In the Comprehensive Epistle (RJ, 2:297), the Brethren attack those who identify themselves as adherents of "al-tawhīd". Although the Mu'tazilah are known as ahl al-'adl wa al-tawhīd, it is interesting that what the Brethren are attacking here is the belief of this group in corporealism. This doctrine is totally alien to the Mu'tazilah.
  48. Al-Shahrastānī, Milal, 1:43.
  49. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 46; William M. Watt, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press, 1973), p. 229 (hereafter cited as Formative Period).
  50. Al-Shahrastānī, Milal, 1:45.

51. Watt, Formative Period, p. 234.
52. Ibid., p. 235.
53. Ibid., p. 231; Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 47.
54. RIS, 3:498-500.
55. RIS, 3:499. See also RIS, 1:299, 303; 2:449-50; 3:273; RJ, 2:417-18.
56. RIS, 3:500.
57. RIS, 3:518-19.
58. RIS, 3:474.
59. RIS, 3:474-99.
60. RIS, 3:476.
61. RIS, 3:475.
62. RIS, 3:479.
63. See the discussion of their views concerning punishment and reward in the previous passage.
64. RIS, 3:479-80.
65. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 47; Marmura, Der Islam, pp. 324-25; al-Shahrastānī, Milāl, 1:45.
66. RIS, 3:480.
67. Watt, Formative Period, p. 229; Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 47.
68. RIS, 3:502-03.
69. RIS, 1:426.
70. A typical example of such a case is the archer who releases an arrow to kill a man but dies before the arrow hits and kills the man. Does the responsibility for his death fall on the archer or on God. See Watt, Formative Period, p. 237.

71. Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir held that whatever generates from a man's act is of his doing. Abū al-Hudhayl, on the other hand, asserted that man is responsible only for the acts generated by him as long as he knows its modality. See Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 48; Watt, Formative Period, pp. 237-238.
72. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 52.
73. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, pp. 49-50; Watt, Formative Period, p. 237.
74. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 50.
75. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 49.
76. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 49-50
77. RIS, 2:128-29.
78. RIS, 2:128.
79. RIS, 2:130. Mu'tazilites like Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir and Ja'far ibn Ḥarb believed in the concept of lutf. But while the latter understood it as an inner strengthening from God, the former held that it is a sort of gift that God bestows on whomever He wants. The notion of al-aslah centres around the argument of whether or not God does what is best for man. Bishr advocates that God can do better things if He wishes, while Abū al-Hudhayl and al-Nazzām maintains that God always does what is best, but there are equally "best" alternatives from which He chooses. Al-mukāfu'ah and al-mujāzah of children and beasts produced hair-splitting discussions that involved Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir, Ja'far ibn Ḥarb and al-Iskāfī among others. See Watt, Formative Period, pp. 239-41.
80. RIS, 2:130.
81. RIS, 2:63ff.
82. Watt, Formative Period, pp. 242ff.



83. RIS, 3:515-17
84. RIS, 3:513-14.
85. Note that Watt, relying on al-Ash'arī, believes that the terms mushabbihah and mujjāsimah do not stand for sects, but rather apply to individuals like Hishām ibn al-Hakam and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān. See Watt, Formative Period, p. 248. Al-Shahrastānī, however, uses these terms as a method of classifying and defining sects. Thus, under the title "al-Sifātiyah" (i.e. those who believe in the positive attributes of God), he mentions al-mushabbihah and al-kurramiyah, who were also mujjāsimah, as sub-sects. See al-Shahrastānī, Milal, 1:92-114.
86. RIS, 3:344-45.
87. RIS, 3:517-18.
88. Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 58.
89. RIS, 3:513-14.
90. RIS, 3:517.
91. Ibid. See also, Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 62.
92. W. Montgomery Watt, "Early Discussions about the Qur'ān," MW 39-40 (1949-50):99.
93. This is reported by al-Muḥhibbī, Khulāsat, 4:8.
94. Al-Muḥhibbī, Khulāsat, 4:6-7.
95. Ibid., 4:7-8.
96. Ḥājjī Khalīfah, Kashf, 3:460. Note that Stern maintains that Ḥājjī Khalīfah, after attributing the Epistles in this first entry to the group of Baṣrah, quoted an authority who named al-Majrītī as being the author. There seems to be no such attribution in the first entry. Stern has misread the text. See Stern, "New Information," p. 428, n. 43.

97. Hājji Khalifah, Kashf, 3:460.
98. Al-Alūsī, Jalā', p. 86.
99. As far as we know, it is only 'Alī Yusūf who definitely attributes the Epistles to al-Majrīṭī. See Aḥmad Zakī, "Chapter About Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," in Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', wa Khillān al-Wafā', 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, 1928), pp. 37-38 (hereafter cited as "Chapter").
100. Examples of the MSS that bear al-Majrīṭī's name as the author are, MS 2303 of the Epistles in B.N., Paris, dated 1020 H. and 2306 of the Comprehensive Epistle which appears in the Catalogue des MSS Arabes de la B.N., Paris, p. 404. See Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 19, 20.
101. Zakī, "Chapter", p. 39; Ḥusain F. al-Hamdānī, "Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā in the Literature of the Ismā'īlī Ṭaiyibī Da'wat," Der Islam 20 (1932):281-82 (hereafter cited as "Rasā'il in the Literature"); Stern, "New Information," p. 420; Hījāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 66-67. Abū al-Qāsim Maslamah al-Majrīṭī [pseud.], Ghāyat al-Hakīm wa Aḥaqq al-Natījatayn bi al-Taqdīm, ed. H. Ritter, Studien der Bibl. Warburg, no. XII (Leipzig, Berlin: Das Ziel des Weisen, 1933), pp. 1-2 (hereafter cited as Ghāyat). The passage, as translated by Hamdani, reads, "... we have produced treatises on Mathematical Sciences and Philosophical problems wherein we have discussed these matters fully. No one of our contemporaries has forestalled us. These treatises (Rasā'il) have been circulated among them (the people) and are known to them. They vie with each other in scrutinizing them and persuading their contemporaries to read them. But no one knows who compiled (them) and where they were compiled, except those who are skillful among them, when they study them deeply on account of their admiration and appreciation of their style. They know that they were products of their own time, but they do not know who compiled them," "Rasā'il in the Literature," pp. 281-82.
102. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 281; Stern, "New Information," p. 420.

103. Zakī, "Chapter", p. 39.
104. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 70-71.
105. Brockelmann, Litteratur, suppl. 1, p. 432, n. 10.
106. Stern, "New Information," p. 428, n. 43.
107. Al-Disūqī, Ikhwān al-Safā, pp. 65, 66, 69.
108. Hannā al-Fākhūrī and Khalīl al-Jirr, Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-‘Arabiyyah, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Mu’assasat Badran wa Shurakāh, 1963), p. 164.
109. EI<sup>1</sup>, s.v. "Madjritī," by E. Wiedemann, vol. 3, p. 96; Hamdani, "Rasā’il in the Literature," p. 282.
110. Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 38.
111. Stern, "New Information," pp. 420, 427, n. 42.
112. Sā‘id, Tabaqāt, pp. 90-92; Abū al-Qāsim Khalaf ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Bashkiwāl, Kitāb al-Ṣilah, Turāthunā, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah li al-Ta‘līf wa al-Tarjamah, 1966), 2:623.
113. ‘Abd al-Raḥman Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1981), pp. 496-97, 504-05.
114. Sā‘id, Tabaqāt, pp. 92-93.
115. Stern, "New Information," p. 428, n. 43.
116. See, for example, RIS, 1:97, 403; 2:279.
117. See, for example, RIS, 1:30, 43, 50, 156; 2:180; 3:29, 88, 162; 4:397.
118. Al-Tawḥīdī, al-Imtā’, 2:4ff.
119. This book was written on the request of the famous geometrician Abū al-Wafā’ al-Buzjānī who introduced al-Tawḥīdī to Ibn Sa‘dān. See al-Tawḥīdī, al-Imtā’, pp. d. ff. Note that A. Hamdani repeats Stern’s erroneous statement that it was Zayd ibn Rifā‘ah who introduced al-Tawḥīdī to Ibn Sa‘dān. See EI<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī," by S. Stern; Abbas Hamdani, "Abū

- Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and the Brethren of Purity," IJMES 9(1978):348, n. 20 (hereafter cited as "Abū Ḥayyān").
120. Al-Tawḥīdī, al-Imtāʾ, 2:4.
  121. *Ibid.*, 2:5.
  122. Al-Mantīqī, Ṣiṭwān, pp. 361-64.
  123. Al-Baihaqī, Hukamāʾ, pp. 35-37. Note that Hamdani wrongly states that al-Tawḥīdī's report was ignored until al-Giftī revived it, two and a half centuries later. See Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 351.
  124. Al-Giftī, Tārīkh, pp. 82ff.
  125. Al-Ṣafadī, Vienna MS, cited by Flügel, "Inhalt," pp. 19, 22-23.
  126. See Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 25; Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 352, n. 35; Hijāb, al-Falsafah, p. 64.
  127. Ḥājji Khalīfah, Kashf, 3:460.
  128. Hamdani, "Rasāʾil in the Literature," p. 283.
  129. Al-Giftī, Tārīkh, p. 82. The translation is by Hamdani, "Rasāʾil in the Literature," p. 283.
  130. Al-Giftī, Tārīkh, p. 82. The translation is by Hamdani, "Rasāʾil in the Literature," p. 283.
  131. ʿArif Tāmīr, Ibn Sīnā fī Marābiʿ Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Beirut: Muʾassasat ʿIzz al-Dīn, 1983), pp. 89-100; Ghālib, Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ, pp. 21ff. Note that Ghālib accepts in one of his books the four names given by al-Tawḥīdī, adding to them six other names, claiming that all ten were Ismāʿīlī dāʿīs who had composed the Epistles on the order of the hidden imam. He gives as his source, some of the unpublished Ismāʿīlī literature without naming any. See Ghālib, al-Daʿwah, pp. 163-64.
  132. Writing at a time when the Imtāʾ was still in MS form, Awa declares his skepticism regarding the correctness and reliability of al-Giftī's quotation.

Now that al-Imtā' is published, this claim cannot be substantiated. See Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 27-28.

133. Al-Mantiqī, Siwan, p. 361.
134. Tāj al al-Din Abū al-Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī, Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyah al-Kubrā, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī and 'Abd al-Fatāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw, 10 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965), 3:282-90, 328, 478, 483 (hereafter cited as Tabaqat). Surprisingly, Ḥijāb, depending on the title of the book, concludes that the likelihood that this al-Maqdisī is the same Maqdisī of the Brethren is very remote. His conclusion stems from the false assumption that the rejection of kalām is a rejection of rational reasoning in religious issues, a theme which, he continues, is against the Brethren's beliefs. See Ḥijāb, al-Falsafah, p. 65.
135. Al-Tawḥidī, al-Imtā', 2:157. Note that Hamdani comments that sāhib al-madhhab refers either to the leader of the Qarmatians or else to the Fāṭimids. This comment is obviously based on his personal judgement, as there is nothing in al-Tawḥidī's text that justifies such an identification. See Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 348.
136. 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwāt, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'Arabiyyah li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Tawzī' wa al-Nashr, 1966), 2:611 (hereafter cited as Tathbīt).
137. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Mu'jam al-Uḍabā', ed. Aḥmad Farid Rifā'i, 20 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'mūn, 1936), 5:73-79.
138. Most of the modern sources misread his name as al-'Awfī. We do not find this reading in any of the original sources with the exception of Ḥājji Khalīfah. See al-Tawḥidī, al-Imtā', 2:4-5; Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:323; al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt, 2:611; al-Baihaqī, Hukamā', pp. 35, 36, n. 1; Ḥājji Khalīfah, Kashf, 3:460. It should be noted though that it appears from Ibn al-Nadīm's report on him that al-'Awqī was not his real name.

139. Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, 7:323.
140. Al-Baihaqī, Hukamā', pp. 74-75.
141. Hājjī Khalīfah, Kashf, 3:369. Note that Stern, without giving his reasons, observes that it is more than doubtful that al-ʿAwqī who wrote the treatise on aqṣām al-mawjūdat is the same al-ʿAwqī of the Brethren. See S.M. Stern, "Additional Notes to the Article The Authorship of the Epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," IC 21 (1947):403.
142. Hamdani, "Abū Hayyān," pp. 346, 347-48, 351.
143. Al-Tawḥīdī, al-Imtā', 1:42-44.
144. Hamdani, "Abū Hayyān," 347, 350-51.
145. Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī, al-Muqābasāt, ed. Ḥusain al-Sandūbī (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyah, 1929).
146. Abū Hayyan al-Tawḥīdī, Risālat al-Ṣadāqah wa al-Ṣadīq, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Kilānī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1964), pp. 63ff. (hereafter cited as al-Ṣadāqah).
147. Hamdani, "Abū Hayyān," pp. 350-51.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
149. For the text of the letter, see al-Tawḥīdī, al-Muqābasāt, pp. 25-39. For the opinions regarding the forgery, see *ibid.*, pp. 39-44.
150. Note also that in the case of the letter of Abū Bakr the fabrication was so professional that it required an expert to discover that the style of the letter differed from the early Arabic language style. See Al-Tawḥīdī, al-Muqābasāt, pp. 42-44. The forgery in the case of the identity of the authors of the Epistles, if there is any, would have been so unprofessional compared with the other case. For one thing, the four individuals mentioned by al-Tawḥīdī were all alive at the time and two of them were well known public figures, namely al-Zanjānī and Zayd, and the latter, the accused according to Hamdani, was a court figure also. It must have occurred to al-Tawḥīdī that Ibn Saʿdān could have easily asked Zayd about the Epistles

and his relation with their authors. Moreover, one wonders, if the story was a fabrication aimed at convincing Ibn Sa'dān of Zayd's heresies, then why would al-Tawhīdī include it in the book which was not intended for him. For a biography of Zayd ibn Rifā'ah, see al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād, 8:450-51; Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajjar al-'Asqalānī, Lisān al-Mīzān, 7 vols. (Hyderabad: Dār'irāt al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyah, 1330 H.), 2:506-07.

151. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:157-60.
152. RIS, 1:308-10.
153. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Sadāqah, pp. 8, 63ff.
154. *Ibid.*, pp. 63ff.
155. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:2ff.
156. See al-Mantiqī, Siwān, pp. 361-64; RIS, 4:57-58.
157. See Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 350.
158. Al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt, 2:355-56.
159. *Ibid.*, 2:610-11.
160. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:11-12; see also RIS, 2:141, 325, 443; 3:10, 485; 4:461.
161. Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 350.
162. Badawī, introduction to Siwān al-Hikmah by al-Mantiqī, pp. 21-22.
163. See al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:6.
164. Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 350.
165. Al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt, 2:611.
166. Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 350.
167. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtā', 2:11ff.
168. Al-Mantiqī, Siwan, p. 361.

169. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtāʿ, 2:157.
170. Al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt, 2:610, 611.
171. Hamdani, "Abū Hayyān," p. 350.
172. Ibid., p. 349.
173. Stern, "New Information," pp. 406-07, 412. See also the lengthy polemic of al-Hamadhānī against the Ismāʿīlīs and his attack on their missionaries, accusing them of heresy. Al-Hamadhānī, Tathbīt, 2:599ff.
174. Ibn Zuhrah, Risālat al-Uṣūl, p. 121. Note that Muṣṭafā Ghālib questions the authenticity of the attribution of this treatise to this early dāʿī. See Ghālib, Aʿlām al-Ismāʿīliyah, pp. 201-02. See also Stern, "New Information," p. 415.
175. Ibn Zuhrah, al-Uṣūl, pp. 120-21.
176. Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad, Fuṣūl wa Akhbār, quoted in, Tāmir, Haqīqat, p. 13.
177. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥamidī, Kitāb Kanz al-Walad, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib, al-Nasharāt al-Islamiyah, no. 24 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1971), particularly chapter 6.
178. See Stern, "New Information," p. 417.
179. Ibid.; Hamdani, "Rasāʾil in the Literature," p. 292.
180. See Stern, "New Information," pp. 417-18; Hamdani, "Rasāʾil in the Literature," p. 292, and appendix III, p. 299 for the relevant quotation from Dāmigh al-Bātil.
181. Al-Ḥusain ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd, al-Risālah al-Wahīdah fī Tathbīt Arkān al-ʿAqīdah, pp. 26-27 (hereafter cited as al-Wahīdah). A manuscript of this text exists in the Bombay University Library. See Muʿizz Goriawala, compiler, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Fyzee Collection of Ismaili Manuscripts (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1965), p. 101, no. 125. Another MS of al-Wahīdah belongs to the private Hamdani collection and is in the



possession of Dr. Abbas Hamdani. This latter MS is the one used in this thesis.

182. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 295, and appendix II, p. 299 for the relevant quotation from the text.
183. See al-Quraishī, 'Uyūn, pp. 367ff. For the report of Zahr al-Ma'ānī, see Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," pp. 292-94. It is the opinion of the Hāmdanids themselves that da'ī Idrīs' version is a synthesis of most of the earliest versions. See Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," pp. 294-97; Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 71.
184. See Stern, "New Information," p. 419.
185. One should note here that al-Qādī al-Nu'mān (d. 363) refers in his al-Risālah al-Mudhdhahabāh to four dignitaries of the Ismā'īlī movement. In a footnote to this passage, Tāmir identifies these with the four dā'īs mentioned in Risālat al-Uṣūl wa al-Ahkām referred to in n. 174 above. Although al-Nu'mān's passage does not refer, explicitly or implicitly, to the Epistles of the Brethren, Tāmir, in two of his works, misleadingly incorporates his own comments into his paraphrase of al-Nu'mān's passage, giving the impression that the very early Ismā'īlī figure al-Nu'mān mentioned the Epistles and their authors. See al-Qādī al-Nu'mān ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥayūn al-Maghribī al-Tamīmī, al-Risālah al-Mudhdhahabāh, in Tāmir, Khams Rasā'il Ismā'īliyah, p. 72; Tāmir, Haqīqat, p. 19; Tāmir, Ibn Sīna, p. 97.
186. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 294.
187. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 71.
188. See, for example, al-Quraishī, 'Uyūn, p. 367; Sharaf al-Dīn Ja'far, al-Risālah al-Mūqizah, cited by Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 299.
189. RIS, 1:269; 2:20.
190. Tāmir, Ibn Sīna, p. 100.

191. Tāmir, Haqīqat, p. 15, n. 1.
192. Ibid., p. 18, n. 2.
193. Tāmir, al-Imamah, pp. 138, 182-83.
194. Hījāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 78-79.
195. Marquet, Ikhwan al-Ṣafāʾ, p. 1072.
196. Yves Marquet, "Les Iḥwān al-Ṣafāʾ et le Christianisme," Islamochristiana 8 (1982):131; Yves Marquet, Ismailiens, p. 235, n. 1.
197. See, in addition to his articles mentioned in the preceding footnotes, "Le Qadi Nuʿmān et les Heptades d'Imams," Arabica XXV (1978):225-32; "Les Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ et l'Ismāʿilisme," in Convegno Sugli Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ (Rome: Accademia dei Lincei, 1979); "Les Epitres des Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafāʾ: Oeuvre Ismailienne," SI LXI (1985):57-79.
198. Marquet, Les Ikhwans, p. 585.
199. Marquet, Imamat, p. 49.
200. Yves Marquet, "La Place du Travail dans la Hiérarchie Ismāʿīlienne d'après l'Encyclopédie des Frères de la Pureté," Arabica 8 (1961):226.
201. Marquet, Ismailiens, pp. 241-42; Marquet, "Le Qāḍī Nuʿmān," pp. 225-32..
202. Marquet, Ismailiens, pp. 240-41.
203. See pp. 188-91 above.
204. Marquet, Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, p. 1072.
205. Marquet, Ismailiens, pp. 235-36.
206. See Stern, "New Information," pp. 417, 421-22; Marquet, Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, p. 1072.
207. Stern, "New Information," p. 417.
208. See pp. 249-53 above.

209. M. Stern, "The Authorship of the Epistles of the Ikhwān-Aṣ-Ṣafā," IC 20 (1946):369 (hereafter cited as "Authorship").
210. Al-Tawhīdī, al-Imtāʿ, 2:15.
211. *Ibid.*, 2:15-16.
212. *Ibid.*, 2:16.
213. Marquet, Ikhwān al-Safāʾ, p. 1072.
214. Marquet, Ismailien, p. 236; Hamdani, "Fātimid Source," p. 73; Hamdani, "Shades," p. 454.
215. RIS, 1:26, 421-23.
216. Al-Sijistānī, Ithbāt, p. 158.
217. Aḥmad Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, al-Masābīh fī lthbāt al-Imāmah, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut: Dār Ḥamad, 1969), particularly pp. 96-104.
218. RIS, 4:137.
219. Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥayūn, Daʿāʾim al-Islām wa Dhikr al-Halal wa al-Haram wa al-Qadāyā wa al-Ahkām, ed. Aṣīf ibn ʿAlī Aṣghar Fayḍī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1951), 1:5 (hereafter cited as Daʿāʾim). The translation is from, Makarem, Ismailis, p. 13.
220. RIS, 3:153.
221. RIS, 3:493.
222. RIS, 4:127, 380.
223. RIS, 4:380.
224. RIS, 4:125.
225. RIS, 4:127.
226. RIS, 4:137.

227. Al-Nu'mān, Da'ā'im, 1:3.
228. RIS, 4:50.
229. RIS, 4:51.
230. RIS, 4:52ff. For a useful discussion of the nature and role of the teacher in the Brethren's thought which shows that they did not view him as an Ismā'īlī imam, see Nadia, Falsafat al-Tarbiyah, pp. 391-407.
231. For a useful discussion of this notion of the infallibility of the imam and how it contradicts the Brethren's beliefs, see Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 41ff.; Ian Richard Netton, "Brotherhood Versus Imāmate: Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and the Ismā'īlīs," JSAI 2 (1980):259-61.
232. RIS, 3:303.
233. RIS, 3:156.
234. See Makarem, Ismailis, p. 44.
235. Al-Sijistānī, Ithbāt, p. 182.
236. RIS, 1:335.
237. RIS, 4:124.
238. RIS, 3:384.
239. RIS, 1:208, 225, 290; RJ, 1:99, 139.
240. RJ, 1:60.
241. RIS, 3:30. See also 1:323; 2:141; 4:189, 194.
242. RIS, 1:207, 251; 2:60, 142, 145, 152; 3:35-86, 347; 4:36..
243. RIS, 4:41-42, 167.
244. Hamdani, Comparison, p. 4.
245. RIS, 3:263.

246. RIS, 4:196.
247. RIS, 1:335.
248. RIS, 3:356.
249. RIS, 2:287-88.
250. RIS, 3:47.
251. RIS, 1:213; 4:53, 460.
252. One should note here, for example, the opinion given by Ibn Taymiyah regarding 'Alī. Although Ibn Taymiyah does not display hostility towards the first three caliphs, he does not reject 'Alī either. On the contrary, he praises his knowledge and asceticism and emphasizes his right to the caliphate. See Ibn Taymiyah, Mukhtasar Fatāwā, pp. 478-88.
253. For the Brethren's lament for these incidents, see RIS, 4:33, 171, 195, 269.
254. RIS, 2:286.
255. RIS, 4:269.
256. See pp. 277-78 below for further discussion of this reference to al-Ṣiddīq, al-Farūq and Dhū al-Nūrayn.
257. RIS, 3:488-489. See also 1:267; RJ, 1:124.
258. RIS, 1:184.
259. RIS, 2:335.
260. RIS, 4:268.
261. For examples, see RJ, 1:53, 126-27, 196; 2:199-203, 507, 517, 520-24.
262. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," pp. 286-87.
263. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
264. Awa, L'Esprit, p. 42; al-Farūqī, on the other hand, emphasizes the Sunni tone in such salutations. See al-Farūqī, "Ethics," pp. 21-22, n. 109.

265. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 450.
266. Ibid., pp. 451-52; see RIS, 4:130-38.
267. One should refer here to the beginning of the discussion to see that the Brethren are referring to the first ruler of the good regime, the prophet-lawgiver. See RIS, 4:125.
268. RIS, 1:181-82.
269. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 454.
270. RJ, 1:53.
271. Hamdani, Comparison, p. 3.
272. RJ, 1:53.
273. Hamdani, Comparison, p. 3.
274. RJ, 2:517ff., 520-24.
275. See Hamdani, "Shades," pp. 454-55; Hamdani, Comparison, p. 7; Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 73; Marquet, Ismailiens, p. 235.
276. RIS, 4:190.
277. This is derived from their emphasis on the fact that the destiny of this man is a secret that was unlocked for them through astronomical methods. It can also be derived from their advice to the brother they sent to him to "smoothly" disclose to him what was revealed to them concerning his destiny and role.
278. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 456.
279. See, for example, RIS, 1:58.
280. RIS, 1:140-41, 213, 229, 232, 297-98, 311; 3:362.
281. RIS, 1:217; 3:180, 199.
282. RIS, 3:206.

283. See RIS, 4:195-97.
284. Hamdani, "Shades," pp. 447-48. See also Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 104ff.
285. Hamdani, "Shades," pp. 447-49, 451.
286. Ibid., pp. 447-48; Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 70, n. 2. See RIS,
287. RIS, 1:213; 4:53, 460.
288. RIS, 1:346.
289. RIS, 4:269.
290. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 289, n. 1. Also, al-Walid, al-Wahidāh, pp. 19-23.
291. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 447.
292. Marquet, Imamat, p. 73.
293. See Hijāb, al-Falsafah, p. 393, n.4.
294. RIS, 2:325; 3:490.
295. RIS, 4:75.
296. RIS, 3:489; 4:75.
297. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 249; Marquet, Imamat, pp. 55-58.
298. RIS, 3:161.
299. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 448.
300. Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 107-08.
301. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 459.
302. RIS, 4:148.
303. See, for example, RIS, 1:323; 4:148; RJ, 1:16.
304. This reference comes in a late Ismā'īlī work entitled al-Masā'il al-Sayfiyah presumably by Yusuf Najm al-Dīn (d. 1798) and quoted by Hamdani, "Rasā'il

- in the Literature," p. 291 and Stern, "New Information," p. 417.
305. Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl wa al-Muwaṣil ilā Dhī al-ʿIzzah wa al-Jalāl, ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil ʿAyyād, 7th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus li al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr, 1967), pp. 88, 98.
  306. See, for example, RIS, 2:243, 261; 3:169, 501, 523, 535, 539.
  307. RIS, 3:486-87.
  308. RIS, 3:312.
  309. RIS, 2:50-51.
  310. RIS, 2:376.
  311. RIS, 4:42.
  312. RIS, 3:501.
  313. See, for example, De Boer, History, p.82; Stern, "New Information," p. 420.
  314. See, for example, Tāmīr, al-Imamah, p. 182; Ghālib, al-Daʿwah, pp. 162-63.
  315. This date would be derived from al-ʿAbd's theory that the beginnings of the society of the Brethren goes back to the time of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (80-148). See al-ʿAbd, al-Insān, p. 24.
  316. This date is suggested by Paul Casanova in his article, "Une Date Astronomique dans les Epitres des Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ," JA 5 (1915):5-17 (hereafter cited as "Date Astronomique"). His theory will be discussed in detail in the text.
  317. The external evidence he alludes to relates to al-Tawḥīdī's account, as reported by al-Qifṭī, of the fact that the authors of the Epistles are mentioned by Ḥājī Khalīfah after his entry on al-Faryābī (d. 319/931), and of the fact that al-Majrītī, whom he believes to have introduced the Epistles to Spain, died in 395/1005. See Fr. Dieterici, Die Philosophie der Araber, 16 vols. (Leipzig-Berlin, 1858-91), 1:141, 142, 143 (hereafter cited as Philosophie).



318. Ibid., 1:142, 143.
319. Louis Massignon, "Sur la Date de la Composition des Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafa," Der Islam 4 (1913):324 (hereafter cited as "Date de la Composition").
320. Gumayr, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', pp. 9-10.
321. Awa, L'Esprit, p. 13. Note that Awa writes that he was able to determine the identity of some verses. See Awa, L'Esprit, p. 13, n. 2.
322. RIS, 4:142.
323. RIS, 4:148.
324. Casanova, "Date Astronomique," pp. 5-17.
325. RIS, 1:154-55; 3:266. See Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 37, n. 4; Jabbūr 'Abd al-Nūr, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Nawābiḡh al-Fikr al-'Arabī, no. 7 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1961), pp. 22-23.
326. Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 37, n. 4; 'Abd al-Nūr, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', p. 23.
327. Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 37, n. 4.
328. 'Abd al-Nūr, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', pp. 22-23.
329. This view is abridged from the following works of Marquet: "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1072-73; Les Ikhwans, p. 8; "Les Iḥwān et le Christianisme," pp. 130-31. Note that only in his article "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'" in EI<sup>2</sup> does he fix the time of the composition of the Epistles between 287/900 (perhaps even earlier) and 354/965. He never, however, gives any reason for this early terminus ad quem which he changes in some of his other writings.
330. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 42-43.
331. Ibid., pp. 78-79.
332. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
333. RIS, 4:173-74.

334. RIS, 4:51-52.
335. RIS, 4:52.
336. RIS, 4:173.
337. Al-‘Abd, al-Insān, pp. 24-26.
338. Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 103-04.
339. *Ibid.*, p. 104; Hamdani, "Shades," p. 458.
340. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 67; Hamdani, "Shades," p. 458.
341. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," pp. 67-68; Hamdani, "Shades," pp. 456-58.
342. *Ibid.*
343. There are attempts by some scholars to determine the identity of the verses in the Epistles. In addition to the attempts related in the text, see Awa's attempt referred to in n. 320 above.
344. Imru' al-Qays, Basūs, al-Nābigha and ‘Urwa ibn Hizām, for example, are mentioned by name. Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 107.
345. See RIS, 3:272, 274; Massignon, "Date de la Composition," p. 324.
346. See RIS, 1:139; Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 106. Note that verses in Persian are rare in the Epistles. Besides the example cited in this note, Persian lines appear in two other places only, 1:209, 235.
347. Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 105.
348. See RIS, 2:59; 3:248; Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 37, n. 5.
349. Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 106-07.
350. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-06.
351. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
352. *Ibid.*, p. 106; Tibawi, "Critical Review," p. 35, n. 5.

353. Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 12-13.
354. RIS, 4:75ff.
355. RIS, 4:61ff.
356. RIS, 4:75.
357. RIS, 4:75-76.
358. Diwald, Arabische Philosophie, p. 17.
359. RIS, 3:161.
360. Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1072.
361. Hamdani, "Shades," p. 448.
362. Hamdani, "Arrangement," p. 108. One should note here that Marquet write that the Ash'arites' doctrines were often attacked in the Epistles. See Marquet, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'," p. 1072. Nasr gives a specific example of a place where the well-known Ash'arite doctrine that denies the action of Nature, which states that there is no proper action except by "the Alive" (sic), is criticized. See Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 60.
363. Hamdani, "Arrangement," pp. 107-08.
364. See RIS, 4:129-30; VC, pp. 105-06.
365. See Introduction, n. 11.
366. Marquet, "Imamat," p. 50, n. 2.
367. Hamdani, "Comparison," pp. 1-2.
368. See Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 124.
369. TS, pp. 94-95.
370. VC, pp. 105-06.
371. Hamdani, "Comparison," p. 2.

372. Marquet mentions in this regard that the Brethren either did not know al-Fārābī or rather that they despised him. See Marquet, Les Ikhwans, p. 31.
373. Only a reference to the astrologer Abū Ma'shar Ja'far ibn Muḥammad (d. 272/885) is given. RIS, 4:288-89. Although, as Marquet observes, they criticized al-Kindī, they did not refer to him by name. See Marquet, Les Ikhwans, p. 31.
374. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusain al-Mas'ūdī, Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-lshrāf (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1968), pp. 102-03 (hereafter cited as Tanbīh). For an exposition of this feature in al-Mas'ūdī's book, see S.M. Stern, "al-Mas'ūdī and the Philosopher al-Fārābī", in S. Maqbul Ahmad and A. Rahman, eds, al-Mas'ūdī Millenary Commemoration Volume (Calcutta: The Indian Society for the History of Science and the Institute for Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, 1960), pp. 28-42.
375. Al-Mas'ūdī, Tanbīh, pp. 105-06.
376. See n. 181 above.
377. See n. 101 above.
378. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," pp. 62, 64-68.
379. Ibid., pp. 65, 73.
380. Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 294.
381. See Stern, "New Information," p. 419; Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 72.
382. Stern, "New Information," p. 427, n. 35.
383. Examine Hamdani, "Re-Examination," pp. 173-75.
384. Ibid., pp. 186ff.
385. Ibid., p. 187.
386. Ibid., n. 88.

387. Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Naisabūrī, Kitāb Istitār al-Imam, ed. W. Ivanow, BFA 4 (Dec. 1936):95.
388. See Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 66.
389. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
390. Ibid., pp. 63-64; al-Wahīdah, pp. 24-27.
391. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 63; al-Wahīdah, p. 24.
392. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 63; al-Wahīdah, p. 25.
393. al-Wahīdah, p. 25.
394. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 64; al-Wahīdah, pp. 26-27.
395. Diwald, Arabische Philosophie, p. 16.
396. Ghayat, p. 1.
397. Hamdani, "Abū Ḥayyān," p. 350.
398. Note that both H. Hamdani and Stern hold that this work had been written at least half a century after the death of al-Majrīṭī. See Hamdani, "Rasā'il in the Literature," p. 281; Stern, "New Information," p. 420.
399. H. Ritter, introduction to Picatrix, Das Ziel des Weisen by Pseudo-Magrīṭī, translated into German from the Arabic by Hellmut Ritter and Martin Plessner, Studies of the Warburg Institute, vol. 27 (London, 1962), p. ixi.
400. RIS, 4:394, 397.
401. Ghāyat al-Hakim, p. 175.
402. RIS, 4:115.
403. Ghāyat al-Hakim, p. 175.
404. Ibid., p. 85.
405. Ibid., p. 396.

406. Ibid., p. 195.

407. Ibid., p. 169.

408. RIS, 4:39.

409. RIS, 4:173.

410. RIS, 4:145-48, 251-54.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL SETTING OF THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE BRETHREN OF PURITY

The Brethren of Purity strove in their Epistles to cover -- in varying degrees of detail -- the subject matter of the existing sciences of the day. The encyclopedic work which resulted from this effort might appear to be a mere accumulation of materials with no systematized programme to hold all the treatises together. This, however, is not the case; although, admittedly, the eclectic nature of the work often gives such an impression. An educational motive, ethical and philosophical, but ultimately religious, sometimes muted, but ever present, gives their Epistles a unifying theme. This motive is prompted by a keen sensitivity to the evil of the times.

A thorough reading of the Epistles shows that the Brethren were dissatisfied with the current social, political, economical, moral and religious bankruptcy. The Epistles manifest a keen awareness of the plight of man in such a troubled period. But instead of aiming at securing man's happiness in this world, they made their essential object the salvation of his soul after it is released from the body. As we shall see, the true happiness of the soul, according to the Brethren, is achieved when it reascends after death to the world of celestial spheres (ʿālam al-aflāk) and ultimately to the world of spirits (ʿālam al-arwāḥ). In order to reach this abode, the soul must disengage itself, during its earthly life, from the defilements of the body. This is because its engagement with the body prevents it from purifying itself through the acquisition of true knowledge of the realities of creation.

It is in order to aid the cause of acquiring this knowledge that the Brethren constructed a programme of education throughout the four volumes of their work. This programme represents an ascending scale of knowledge. It begins with mathematics, ascends to physics, then psychology, and, finally, to divine sciences. Divine science constitutes the highest rung in the process of the acquisition of knowledge because it draws man near to God and permits his soul to regain the original purity of its essence. Their Epistles are thus written with an emphasis on their spiritual message and as an exposition of their programme of instruction and education. It is this that gives the Epistles a sense of unity.

Since the Brethren's emphasis is essentially on the soul's life in the hereafter, one is not surprised to find that they were not actually concerned with constructing a political philosophy. Thus, unlike al-Fārābī, the thrust of this educational programme is not so much to bring about an ideal political regime as it is to prepare the individual spiritually for the afterlife. This is not to say that the Brethren's thought does not have its political dimension. There is mention of virtuous political leaderships and worthy political regimes. But the worthy political regime is never considered, by them, as the cornerstone of their philosophical structure. Its existence, according to their scheme, is no more than an assisting factor in man's struggle for salvation.

Turning then to the political aspect of their message, to understand it in its proper context, one must turn first to their philosophical structure as a whole. This is because their political views stem directly, as we hope to show, from their metaphysical, psychological and epistemological presuppositions.



## I Metaphysics and Cosmology of the Brethren

The metaphysics of the Brethren is dominated by the theory of emanation. Their obsession with the science of number (‘ilm al-’adad)<sup>1</sup> leads them to explain the relation of God to the creation with that of the "one" to the other numbers. Thus, the emanation of the world from God is compared, in their scheme, to the generation of numbers from "one."<sup>2</sup>

"One," the Brethren teach, is the principle of number. It is an absolute unity that has no parts at all and thus is indivisible. All the numbers, they continue, originate from it. "Two," which is, strictly speaking, the first number, is the repetition of "one" twice. The other numbers originate by the progressive addition of "one" to the previous number.<sup>3</sup> Just as "one" is the principle of number, God is, in the same way, the principle of things.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as the nature of "one" is different from the nature of the other numbers, God, in exactly the same way, is different from the beings emanating from Him.<sup>5</sup>

The Brethren insist that, because God is actually one in all respects, it was not fit to allow any of His creations to be actually one. Thus, they argue, the intellect, which is God's first creation, is not actually one. Inherent in it is a duality which became a law of creation (for example: form and matter, darkness and light, evil and good, etc.).<sup>6</sup> What this passage suggests is that multiplicity, although not in God, nonetheless proceeds directly from Him and is manifested in His first emanation, the intellect. This suggestion is backed by at least two other statements in two different places of their Epistles.<sup>7</sup>

The Brethren reiterate the basic conception which underlies the theory of emanation. They, thus, maintain that it would have been unwise of God, the perfect in existence (tām al-wujūd), the perfection of [all] virtues (kamil al-fadā'il), to keep His virtues to Himself and not to effuse them.<sup>8</sup> They, however, reject the two main implications of this theory; first, that the creation of the world is "necessitated" by God's generosity and wisdom; secondly, that the world is as eternal as God is. These rejections are dictated by their belief that the world has a beginning and an end. This belief, it will become clear, has the greatest bearing on their psychology and epistemology, as well as their political ideas.

It is true, when trying to demonstrate that the existence and persistence of the world is determined by God, the Brethren used, among other examples, that of the relation of the light to the sun; without the latter, the former can neither exist nor persist.<sup>9</sup> They, nonetheless, followed this by a vigorous insistence that, unlike the sun which cannot hold back its light (since when creating it, God made it of a nature that light must, necessarily, stream forth from it), God does not act by any necessity in His nature, but by will and choice. In this respect, He is like the speaker, if he wills to speak he can speak and if he wills not to speak he can stop.<sup>10</sup>

Because the spoken words, unlike the written ones, are created out of nothing and are not composed out of anything, they simply perish when the speaker stops speaking.<sup>11</sup> The Brethren use this analogy to argue for the beginning and the end of the world. They, thus, maintain that God created the world ex-nihilo. The world simply did not exist until God willed it. He then said "Be" and, thus,

it was. Before this, there was neither time, space, motion, matter nor form.<sup>12</sup> Just as the Brethren believe that the world had a beginning, they believe that there will come a time when it ends. When this happens, time itself will terminate because it has no reality independent of the world.<sup>13</sup> The sincerity of the Brethren with regard to this rejection of the eternity of the world is not doubted. Despite the fact that inconsistency is often encountered in their work, they are particularly consistent in their exposition of their views concerning this issue and in their fierce and continuous attack on the dahriyūn, those who believe in the eternity of the world.<sup>14</sup>

According to the cosmic process proclaimed by the Brethren, all beings are divided into universals (kuliyāt) and particulars (juz'iyāt). They arrange the universal beings in nine hierarchical stages which start with the perfectly perfect, the cause of them all, that is, God. The other eight states of universal being are, from top to bottom, the universal intellect, the universal soul, first (or prime) matter, nature,<sup>15</sup> absolute body (or second matter), the spheres, the four elements and the three kingdoms, i.e. minerals, plants and animals (al-muwwaladāt).<sup>16</sup> As we descend down the scale of universals and far away from God, we are in fact moving away from the more perfect ranks of being to the less perfect ones.<sup>17</sup> The Brethren further divide this category of universal beings into two sub-categories: the supraphysical (fawqā al-tabī'iyah) or spiritual (al-ruhanniyah) and the physical. The supraphysical category includes, according to them, the first four ranks of beings, that is, God, intellect, soul and first matter. The physical category constitutes the remaining five ranks which are, unlike the first

four, related to bodies.<sup>18</sup>

The first being that emanated from God is thus the intellect which they sometimes call the Active Intellect and sometimes the Universal Active Intellect.<sup>19</sup> From the intellect, God caused another being, lower than the intellect in rank, to emanate. This is the universal soul.<sup>20</sup> From the universal soul there emanated (fādā) or streamed forth (inbajasā) a third being: the first matter.<sup>21</sup> With the origination of prime matter, the realm of the spiritual beings ends. According to the Brethren, prime matter, like the active intellect and the universal soul, is a simple spiritual essence. However, being below them both in rank and at the final stage in the chain of spiritual beings, it is inactive (ghayr fa'āllah) by nature. It can only receive and accept the actions of the universal soul on it.<sup>22</sup> Thus, this prime matter acquires the three spatial dimensions, that is, length, breadth and depth, by virtue of which it develops into the Absolute Body, also called the second matter.<sup>23</sup>

Here we come across a certain inconsistency in the Brethren's doctrine of cosmic process. The Brethren argue that one of the main features of the realm of spiritual beings is that, unlike the physical realm, it is created instantaneously. They maintain that when God willed the world and said "Be," what came into being as the immediate emanation consisted of the active intellect, the universal soul, the prime matter and the abstract forms effused from the active intellect and accepted by the soul. The origination of the physical beings, on the other hand, took place gradually.<sup>24</sup> It is obvious that the Brethren's statement that the spiritual beings are the active intellect, the universal soul, the abstract

forms and the prime matter, suggests that the absolute body is not considered by them as belonging to the spiritual realm. But, if the main character of the physical realm is that it was brought into being gradually, this would, in other words, mean that, according to their scheme, the absolute body must have come into being gradually. But this is not what the Brethren teach. In different places of their Epistles where they discuss the hierarchical chain of beings, their language always suggests that what took place gradually was the absolute body's acquisition of the spherical shape, not its existence as a quantum that has three dimensions.<sup>25</sup> Thus, whether the absolute body is considered by them the last stage of the spiritual realm or the first step in the physical world remains quite ambiguous. Bearing this difficulty in mind, we now proceed with their cosmological scheme.

Emanation, they reason, ends with the coming into being of the absolute body. This is because, as a body, it is, unlike the spiritual essences above it, condensed, coagulated and far removed from the first cause to the extent that no essence can emanate from it.<sup>26</sup> However, from this second matter, the entire corporeal world ('alam al-ajsām), that is, the celestial spheres, the four elements, the earth and the three kingdoms, comes into being. But how did this take place? Here we come to the Brethren's story of creation which reminds us, in many a respect, of al-Razī's myth of creation.<sup>27</sup>

According to the Brethren, there passed a long period of time during which the universal soul was engaged solely in desiring its direct cause, the active intellect, and in receiving the virtues and the good this intellect emanates on

it. But then came a time when the universal soul became saturated with these virtues. It, then, in its turn, desired to effuse the virtues and the good it acquires onto some other being.<sup>28</sup> Because the chain of beings is hierarchical, it would have been unwise if the soul was allowed to supervene over the being higher than it in rank, that is, the active intellect. Thus, by the necessity of wisdom, the soul desired that one being lower than it in rank, that is, the absolute body (second matter).<sup>29</sup>

Unlike the universal soul that is potentially knowledgeable (‘allāmah bi al-quwwah) with regard to the active intellect and, thus, desires and seeks the virtues and the good in it, matter is neither knowledgeable nor active. It thus neither desires the virtues of the soul nor strives after them. Consequently, the universal soul had to exert great effort in order to supervene over the matter.<sup>30</sup> Because it would have been against God's wisdom and providence to leave the universal soul idle while capable of acting by nature and to leave matter devoid of shapes, forms and life, while capable by nature of accepting them, He intervened to enable the universal soul to relate to the matter, by preparing the absolute body for this relation with the soul. God's act of intervention on the soul's behalf and of preparing the absolute body for it was nothing but the creation of the world of spheres, beginning with the outermost sphere down to the earth.<sup>31</sup> In other words, it was God who endowed matter with form in order to allow the universal soul to rotate the spheres and, in this way, to perfect itself by revealing in the matter the virtues and the good it received from the active intellect.<sup>32</sup> The rotation of the spheres, according to the Brethren, is a manifestation of

the perfection (kamāl) of the universal soul and allows the completeness (ṭamām) of matter to take place.<sup>33</sup>

According to this, and other similar statements,<sup>34</sup> the role of the universal soul is thus confined to moving the world of spheres. However, in at least one place in their Epistles, the Brethren seem to be saying something else. Here, they write that the forms which the universal soul received instantaneously from the active intellect, it effused onto the absolute body gradually. The first form which the universal soul "gave" to the absolute body, they continue, was the spherical (al-shakl al-kurawī). Moreover, they go on, it was the universal soul that arranged these spheres around each other.<sup>35</sup> Thus, what this statement suggests is that it was the universal soul, and not God, that was directly responsible for the bringing about of the corporeal world by endowing matter with form.

The earth, in the Brethren's cosmology, is suspended in the centre of the corporeal world followed by the four elements, then the seven concentric spheres which, in their consecutive order, consist of the spheres of the moon, mercury, venus, the sun, mars, saturn, jupiter, the fixed stars and the outermost or surrounding sphere.<sup>36</sup> While the earth lies stationary in the centre of the cosmos, the other spheres are in motion. According to the Brethren, it is the universal soul that causes this motion. In order to explain how this takes place, they resort to the symbolism of love (‘ishq). All beings, the Brethren write, love God, the principal Beloved (al-ma‘shūq al-awwal) and yearn for Him. It is because of this yearning (shawq) for God, and for the sake of worshipping Him and showing its obedience, that the universal soul desired to make manifest the virtues and

the good God effused on it through the mediation of the active intellect. This desire resulted, not only in the bringing about of the corporeal world through the giving of form to matter, but also in putting the world of spheres into motion.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the universal soul in the Brethren's scheme is the Prime mover.<sup>38</sup>

However, it is only the outermost sphere, the Brethren write, which the universal soul directly causes to move.<sup>39</sup> The outermost sphere, in its turn, is responsible for the movement of the other spheres. It moves clockwise from east to west, above the earth, and from west to east beneath the earth, once every twenty-four hours causing day and night. This rotation of the all-enveloping outermost sphere induces the movement of the other spheres. Although when this outermost sphere moves it carries the other spheres along with it, the movements of these spheres are not uniform but become slower as we move farther from the outermost sphere and toward the moon.<sup>40</sup>

With the moon, the realm of heavenly bodies ends and the world of generation and corruption begins. The composite objects of the world, that is, the minerals, plants and animals, rise from the combination of the four elements that results from the rotation of the planets and their spheres, and the succession of day and night and of the seasons that are caused by these rotations as these interact with the agency of the four primary qualities: the hot, cold, moist and dry.<sup>41</sup> The terrestrial existence, according to the Brethren, is hierarchical. But, unlike the case with the heavenly bodies where the chain of beings starts with the most perfect, the hierarchical order is here reversed.<sup>42</sup> It begins with the lowest rung of terrestrial creation, namely, the minerals. The highest member of



this kingdom is connected to the lowest member of the plant kingdom which, in its turn, is in contact with the animal kingdom.<sup>43</sup> This hierarchical order is also chronological. Thus, minerals, according to the scale of the Brethren, came into existence before plants, and these before animals. This hierarchical/chronological order applies also within each kingdom. Hence, the less developed animals, for example, preceded the more perfect ones and all animals were in existence ages before man.<sup>44</sup>

With the rise of man, the chain of terrestrial beings ends. Man stands at the top of the animal kingdom, that is, at the boundary between the heavenly world and the terrestrial world. By virtue of this, he acts as the link between the two realms. The position which man holds at the top of the chain of the terrestrial beings is due to his epistemological and moral virtues. Hence, within the human species, it is the purification and elevation of the soul through the acquisition of intellectual and moral virtues that act as the criterion for the hierarchical classification of people in this life and also for determining their destiny in the hereafter.

It is hence to the Brethren's psychology and epistemology that we must now turn.

## **II Psychology, Epistemology and Theory of Prophecy**

The Brethren's account of the manner in which the particular souls (al-nufûs al-juz'iyah) came into being and the reason for their joining the natural corporeal bodies in the sublunar world typifies their endeavour, throughout their

Epistles, to harmonize philosophical and religious knowledge. The Brethren believe that the universal soul has a special power that proceeds from it, which the scripture (sharī'ah) calls "angel," but which they themselves, in agreement with the philosophers, call "nature."<sup>45</sup>

It should be recalled that, in the different places where the Brethren discuss their cosmological doctrine of the chain of being, nature is included as one of the universal beings and is assigned either the fourth or the fifth rank. It is, however, very curious that, in their various discussions of the process of emanation itself, nature is never mentioned.<sup>46</sup> Nature is simply referred to as one of the faculties of the universal soul that pervades and governs all the sublunar corporeal beings. Although it is one and is known as the nature of generation and corruption, with regard to each of these corporeal beings, this faculty should be known as the particular soul of this being. Thus, there is a particular soul for the four elements, for each of the species and for every individual within each of the species. These souls represent the infinite powers of this faculty of the universal soul and are but parts of it.<sup>47</sup>

These particular souls, according to the Brethren, existed long before the bodies were originated.<sup>48</sup> The Brethren maintain that, after a period during which these souls performed the acts of worship due to God, accepted the emanation of the intellect and received the benefits of the universal soul, they began to lose interest in these benefits, to become indifferent towards worshipping God and to yearn for the corporeal. This was the sin of the particular souls. Their punishment consists in causing them to fall from atop the outermost sphere to

the corporeal world that begins with the outermost sphere and ends with the earth.<sup>49</sup> On their way down to the centre of the earth, some of these particular souls remembered their true origin and office and repented. Their downward journey was thus interrupted and they were made to unite with the luminous planets in the various hierarchically ranked spheres, each at the stage of its descent where it repented.<sup>50</sup>

Those souls that failed to repent before reaching the last gate of the world of spheres, that is the sphere of the moon, fell to the centre of the earth and were made to unite with the four elements, waiting there in a helpless state of potentiality. In order to give them the opportunity to atone for the sin they committed, they were driven out of this state of potentiality and tied to the natural organic form.<sup>51</sup> In this form, these souls become burdened by the duty of obedience and endurance of bodily pains, these being their only means of elevation from the rank of minerals to that of plants, then to that of animals and finally to the human rank.<sup>52</sup> The rank of humanity, as will be elaborated shortly, is considered by the Brethren as the last stage in the soul's journey of repentance, and the last gate of the world of generation and corruption. This, as we shall explain, the Brethren identify with hell.<sup>53</sup> In this human rank, man is burdened by the bodily acts of worshipping.<sup>54</sup> He also has the duty of using the faculties he possesses by virtue of his body as a means of recapturing the knowledge which was abundant to his soul in its heavenly abode and is now hidden from it by the coarseness of this body itself.<sup>55</sup> Regaining this knowledge is the only way open for man to gain salvation. Without it his soul will remain

constantly a prisoner of the corporeal.<sup>56</sup>

In other places in the Epistles and the Comprehensive Epistle, the Brethren boldly accept the Qur'anic teachings with regard to the story of creation. Here they adopt the story of the fall of Adam from paradise. They, however, adapt it to their teachings, insisting that the story should be interpreted symbolically.<sup>57</sup> The esoteric aspect of the story of the fall of Adam is given by them as follows: Before the earth was peopled with corporeal beings, it was inhabited by spiritual angels whose worship of God did not involve bodily obligations.<sup>58</sup> This period is termed by the Brethren the "Period of exposure" (dawr al-kashf). It was a period during which the universal soul was completely involved in receiving the emanations of the intellect. None of the forms in this intellect was hidden from it.<sup>59</sup> Since, according to the Brethren, the angels are but forces or powers of the universal soul, this by implication would mean that these angels, the beings of the period of exposure, were able to witness the abstract and the absolute and to conceive every form in the intellect. Then it happened, the Brethren continue, as a result of God's wisdom, that these angels, that are nothing but the particular souls, desired to unite with the corporeal. God thus created the body of Adam and breathed in him the soul. With this the "period of concealment" (dawr al-satr) began. This is a period during which the absolute truth and the abstract forms are no more abundant to the particular soul because of its enclosure in the corporeal.<sup>60</sup>

When God willed the period of exposure to terminate, the Brethren go on, He gathered the knowledge of the abstract that was until then available and

concealed it beneath the leaves of a certain tree. He warned Adam against aspiring to what is hidden in this tree and informed him that this kind of knowledge is meant neither for his time nor for the type of being he is.<sup>61</sup> Iblis<sup>62</sup> was one of the beings that belonged to the previous period of exposure.<sup>63</sup> He aspired to be in Adam's place and thus turned to him, seeking revenge. He convinced Adam that by eating from the forbidden tree he would acquire knowledge of the absolute and would thus become immortal. Adam allowed Iblis to seduce him, and ate from the tree. He also started disclosing part of the knowledge he attained to the corporeal beings (the animals) that inhabited paradise with him.<sup>64</sup> Confused by his behaviour and startled by the information he disclosed to them, the animals abhorred him. As a result of his sin of disobeying God and aspiring to a rank that was not meant for him, he was driven out of paradise. For a period of time he roamed the earth deprived of the leading position accorded to him in paradise and leading a life of hardship and sorrow. Eventually Adam repented and God accepted his repentance. However, God ruled that Adam, and his offspring after him, should live the life of the flesh, using their bodies to attain salvation.<sup>65</sup> With Adam, Iblis also fell, so that the struggle would continue.

In several places in their Epistles, the Brethren state that the sin committed by Adam, the first being of the period of concealment, is the reason why the particular souls continued to be made united with sublunary bodies.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the Brethren maintain that all particular souls are on earth in order to repay for the sin of Adam. Indeed, in the Comprehensive Epistle, they argue that Adam and Iblis, like all sublunary beings, are corruptible. Thus, the

continuation of the period of concealment for as long as God wills is made possible through their offspring.<sup>67</sup> This explanation of the reason why particular souls unite with the body contrasts with what they said elsewhere, and which was discussed earlier, about the individual responsibility of each particular soul for its fall when losing interest in the benefits of the universal soul and yearning instead for matter.

At any rate, the Brethren argue that, when a particular soul is made to fall, it enters an ovum that happens to be impregnated at that time. It soon comes under the regimen of the different planets until the term of pregnancy is completed. The growth of the born infant culminates in the attainment of the age of reason and his duty to purify his soul becomes pressing.<sup>68</sup>

Within each human being, the Brethren write, lives a spiritual Iblīs who is represented by the animal soul. Its main concern is to attend to the beastly needs of man and to fulfill his desire for material pleasures. Adam, on the other hand, is represented by the rational soul whose natural role is to supervene over all the other faculties and to govern them. The forbidden tree, according to this analogy, is ignorance and material pleasures. Drawing on this analogy the Brethren argue that, if the individual allows his animal soul to seduce and dominate his rational soul and yields to the careless sleep of ignorance, indulging himself in sensuous pleasures, his rational soul will be stripped of its intellectual abilities in the same manner Adam was left naked after allowing Iblīs to seduce him and to make him eat from the forbidden tree. Relinquishing its real role and what is meant to be its destiny, the rational soul commits a sin as Adam had done.

Like him it also deserves to be punished until it repents and proves itself worthy of being released. If man, however, manages to keep his rational soul in control over his animal soul, he can gain salvation.<sup>69</sup>

The particular soul, the Brethren write, is a spiritual essence that is higher than the body in rank.<sup>70</sup> However, as a result of its sin, it becomes a captive of the nature and a prey to the bestial desires of the flesh.<sup>71</sup> The body thus becomes a temporary house for the soul. Although the body is depreciated a good deal by the Brethren,<sup>72</sup> they nevertheless hold that, during the period of its confinement in the body, the soul has to attend to its needs. This is because the body is the only medium through which the soul can actualize itself and gain salvation. However, it must not attend to the body to the extent of being totally engrossed in its desires and pleasures, but must control it.<sup>73</sup>

It is thus that they regard the human body as the upward path extending between hell and paradise.<sup>74</sup> Hell, for them, is nothing but the world of generation and corruption, the home of the corporeal and the corruptible.<sup>75</sup> Paradise, on the other hand, is the world beyond the spheres, the home of the incorporeal spirits.<sup>76</sup> This belief led them to reject the sensuous interpretations given to punishment and reward.<sup>77</sup> Torment, they maintain, is not to be thrown in a ditch of fire on the day of judgement. It is, however, this worldly life which the soul leads imprisoned in a body which is subject to painful sufferings and experiences. Reward, on the other hand, consists in being set free from the confinement of the body, to join the angelic rank which marks the end of the sufferings that accompany the corporeal status.<sup>78</sup> Life is the period during which the soul is

united with a body. Death means that the soul no longer uses the body as a medium. In fact, the death of the body is the beginning of the real life of the soul. When the soul separates from the body, the latter disintegrates again to the constituent elements of the earth. The soul on the contrary continues to exist.<sup>79</sup>

The Brethren liken the relation of the body to the soul to that of a workshop to an artisan and the tools and the machines in this workshop to the limbs and organs of the body. Every wise artisan, they write, knows that there will come a time when the machines and the tools in his workshop will be too old to allow him to make any money out of this workshop. The only thing that could help the artisan in such a crisis is to have worked hard and saved some money while still able to do so. By the same analogy, the wise man is the one who knows that the time his soul has with his body is limited. He, thus, must benefit from this period by using his body to gain what will save his soul after the destruction of the body.<sup>80</sup> While it is money that the artisan must acquire and save for the time when he can no longer use his tools, there are four things, the Brethren mentioned, that the soul must acquire while attached to the body to gain salvation after separation from it. These are: knowledge of the true nature of things, moral virtues, true opinions and beliefs, and good virtuous deeds.<sup>81</sup> If the soul perceives its body as the workshop whose tools and machines are its means of acquiring these things, it will be saved after the death of the body and will regain its former celestial life.



Just as the universal soul requires matter so that through it it can manifest its virtues, and perfect itself, the particular soul cannot perfect itself and actualize its potentiality without the mediation of the body.<sup>82</sup> The role of the body in this regard resembles, in the Brethren's scheme, the role of the womb. Just as the womb is necessary for the development of the foetus, they write, the body is as necessary for the perfection of the soul. If the soul, while living within the body, and through its mediation, was able to perfect itself intellectually and morally, when it leaves this body, a stage which they liken to the delivery of the foetus, it can lead a full and joyful life. If, on the other hand, its potentiality was not actualized during the time it was able to attain this through the mediation of the body, it will not be able to benefit from its life after the destruction of this body.<sup>83</sup>

The reason for this, according to the Brethren, lies in the fact that if the soul is able, before its dissociation from the body, to discover its true essence as an immaterial substance, it will seek to clean itself of the material accretions that may attach to it during the period of its imprisonment in the body. It will also devote itself to the acquisition of knowledge that culminates in the knowledge of divine matters, that is, knowledge of the abstract spiritual forms and the luminous entities to which the soul originally belongs. Being thus able to witness the beauty and harmony of the incorporeal world, this knowledgeable virtuous soul becomes a potential angel and yearns to join the realm of the actual angels, the vast world of the spheres. Such a soul welcomes death since death to it is nothing but the end of its imprisonment in the corporeal and

the beginning of its real life as a spiritual substance.<sup>84</sup>

The elevation to the rank of an actual angel is the reward this soul receives after departing from the body.<sup>85</sup> The Brethren write that when the time comes for this knowledgeable virtuous soul to stop using the body, the good angels (which they identify with the souls of venus and jupiter) come down to receive and direct it to the heavenly abode. Becoming thus one of the angels, the virtuous soul travels with them to the sacred places and enjoys continuous intellectual bliss. It also communicates with the virtuous souls still attached to bodies, supplying them with good tidings of what is awaiting them.<sup>86</sup> In the meantime, by virtue of the knowledge and the virtues it acquired during its worldly life, this soul becomes a beautiful and perfect form. Consequently, after leaving the body that was encompassing this form, the soul becomes able to see itself. Witnessing its own beauty and enjoying its perfection becomes a source of great pleasure for it.<sup>87</sup> It should be remarked that the Brethren make an exception to this rule of reward. Thus they state that the . . . of the insane and the children are saved by virtue of the recommendation of the prophets and their parents, the rationale being that, legally, their souls are not under obligation.<sup>88</sup>

The destiny of the evil, ignorant souls is in complete contrast to this bright picture the Brethren draw for what is awaiting the virtuous souls. Because the acquisition of knowledge is the only means by which the soul can know its essence as a spiritual substance and can conceive the abstract forms of the spiritual world and hence acquire a place in this world, the ignorant souls, the Brethren explain, which do not care to actualize their potentiality before leaving

the body, cannot benefit from their lives after being separated from the body. Indulging itself in serving the body and fulfilling its bestial needs and material pleasures, the soul cannot live as a spiritual essence independent of the body.<sup>89</sup> This soul, by virtue of the life it leads becomes a potential satan and after leaving the body it becomes an actual one.<sup>90</sup>

Deprived of their senses and, hence, becoming unable to experience the joy derived from the fulfilling of their sensuous needs, the only satisfaction these souls find comes from watching the evil souls that are still attached to the bodies while enjoying the material ignorant life they lead. This is, the Brethren explain, why these actual satans try to communicate with the potential satans to convince them to continue leading their evil lives.<sup>91</sup> The torment of these soul lies in the fact that they are deprived of the body, their only means of acquiring material pleasures. Because material pleasures are the only things they experience while still with the body, they continue to be the only things they desire after leaving this body. But, with the absence of the body, their yearning for the sensuous pleasures remains unfulfilled.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, being swayed by false opinions and complete ignorance, acquiring bad morals and committing evil deeds, these souls acquire an ugly form which is hidden from them by the coarseness of their body. However, when these souls are made to depart from the body and are no more busy serving it, they look at themselves and recognize the ugly and distorted form they really are. This becomes a main source of their torment.<sup>93</sup>

Describing the ill fate of these souls, the Brethren write that, when it is time for them to depart from the bodies they inhabited, the merciless angels

(identified with the souls of saturn and mars) come down to receive these souls.<sup>94</sup> These souls panic and wish to remain in the sublunar world, leading the only life they are trained to live: the life of the flesh. They are, nevertheless, forced out of their bodies.<sup>95</sup> Because of their ignorance, false opinions and beliefs, evil doings and immorality these souls are found to be unworthy of joining the angels, the knowledgeable virtuous beings. They are thus barred from entering the world of the spheres and are kept hovering beyond the sphere of the moon. They are also forbidden to return to the human form they just left since they proved to be unable to benefit from it.<sup>96</sup> Unlike the virtuous souls that are rewarded by being elevated to the angelic rank and by being freed from the imprisonment of the corporeal, the punishment of the ignorant souls consists of being confined again to the prison of nature. Their real calamity consists in their return to a corporeal form that is far beneath the human form they had just left, in order to start the journey of repentance all over again.<sup>97</sup>

It is quite interesting to note here that the Brethren made an exception to this rule of punishment. They write that, while the souls that succeed in actualizing themselves by attaining knowledge of the true nature of things are elevated to the angelic rank, and while those who totally fail to acquire any kind of knowledge are made to fall to the lowest rung of natural beings, there exists a rank between these two categories. This is the rank of those souls that accepted the teachings of the religious law at their face value and followed the exoteric meaning of its rulings. Failing to grasp the esoteric meaning of the religious law which, in the Brethren's scheme, is, as we shall see, in complete

harmony with the philosophic knowledge of the true nature of things, prevents the soul from attaining the angelic rank after departing with the body. However, because these souls lead a morally virtuous life, abiding by the obligations of the religious law, they are returned to neither the plant nor the animal form. Instead, they are returned to the human form, in order to give them a second chance to acquire what they missed during their previous human life so that they may be elevated to the angelic form.<sup>98</sup>

The Brethren thus endorse a doctrine of the transmigration of souls. They hold that the human souls that remain intellectually and morally imperfect during their earthly life are banned from entering the heavenly abode and are kept suspended for some time between the heavens and the earth. Eventually, they will be dragged down, by their desire for the material pleasures, to the earth and will be again forced into the captivity of the hollow bodies and gloomy nature.<sup>99</sup> A series of acts of generation (that is, the existence in a corporeal form) and corruption (that is, the separation from this specific form) will follow.<sup>100</sup> Elevation in the hierarchical chain of sublunar composite kingdoms depends upon the success of this soul to abide by the rules of perfection and obedience belonging to each circle of this chain. The Brethren hold, for example, that the souls of the animals that allow themselves to be domesticated by man and of those that patiently endure being slaughtered are elevated to the rank of a human being after separation from their animal body.<sup>101</sup> The paradise of the souls of the plants, the Brethren thus explain, is the animal form and the paradise of the souls of the animals is the human form. The human form is the last station

in the soul's journey of repentance. If it succeeds in actualizing itself morally and intellectually, it is elevated to the angelic form which is the paradise of the human soul. Within this angelic form, they maintain, there are different ranks which correspond with the various degrees of intellectual and moral levels the soul acquires during its human life.<sup>102</sup> Similar to the case of the hierarchical chain of sublunary beings, elevation is also possible within the hierarchical chain of spiritual angels. The criteria of elevation is also similar, namely, the degree of knowledge and obedience.<sup>103</sup>

With the death of the body, what the Brethren term "the lesser resurrection" (al-qiyāmah al-sughrā), as distinct from "the greater resurrection" (al-qiyāmah al-kubrā), takes place.<sup>104</sup> Now, it has to be noted that the Brethren reject the literal meaning of the Qur'anic statements regarding the resurrection (al-ba'ṭh) of the bodies on the day of judgement.<sup>105</sup> They adopt instead a philosophical interpretation of resurrection which applies to what they mean by both the lesser resurrection and the greater resurrection.

To turn first to the lesser resurrection, according to their argument, the term applies strictly to the virtuous souls. The resurrection in this case means the elevation (through the acquisition of knowledge) of these virtuous souls after their separation from the body to the celestial realm of the spheres. As for the evil souls, the term refers to their return to the prison of nature and their reunion with the gloomy bodies after being released from their captivity. This reunion, according to the Brethren, leads to the resurrection of bodies.<sup>106</sup>

According to this interpretation of the lesser resurrection, the reward of the virtuous souls consists of enjoying the bliss of intellectual contemplation without the hindrance of the corporeal. Thus, it is understandable why the Brethren maintain that it is irrational for any wise man to think that happiness after death consists of the resurrection of his body so that he may indulge in gross material pleasures in paradise. On the contrary, they argue, the resurrection of a body and the union of a soul with it is in fact nothing but a punishment for this soul.<sup>107</sup> As we have mentioned earlier, the Brethren do not believe in the sensuous representations of hell and paradise as pictured in the revealed religions. Paradise, the world of spirits, is where the soul enjoys its real life as a spiritual essence. Hell, the world of generation and corruption, is where the imperfect souls are tormented by being returned to the captivity of the body. With the body, the soul can never experience true happiness.

The saved souls that attain the angelic form never again experience the tribulation of being united with a body and continue partaking of intellectual bliss as long as God wills the heavens and the earth to exist. The evil souls, on the other hand, will continue being reattached to different corporeal forms, including resurrected bodies, as long as God wills the corporeal world to exist.<sup>108</sup> This brings us to the greater resurrection.

The corporeal world's ceasing to exist is the greater resurrection.<sup>109</sup> The Brethren offer an astronomical explanation of how the end of the world will come about. They observe that the spheres began initially to revolve from one specific spot at one specific moment. But, as mentioned earlier, they hold that

because the orbits of the spheres are uneven, their movement is not uniform. However, the Brethren argue, at a certain specific moment in the future all the spheres will meet again in the same point from which they began. When this happens, all the spheres will stop moving.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, day and night, summer and winter, will cease to exist, the four elements will stop mixing and the corporeal world will perish, that is, all the corporeal forms, celestial and terrestrial alike.

The perishing of the corporeal world means the separation of the universal soul from the universal body. This is the death of the universe, since the universe, like man, consists of a body and a soul. Thus, just as an individual human being dies when his soul separates from his body, the universe dies when the universal soul separates from the body of the universe.<sup>111</sup> In other words, if the lesser resurrection means the departure of the particular soul from the particular body, the greater resurrection means the departure of the universal soul from the body of the universe.

The comments the Brethren make about the time factor concerning the separation of the universal soul from the body of the universe and the annihilation of the heavens and the earth is quite obscure. In some places they hold that the separation of the universal soul occurs after the spheres stop moving.<sup>112</sup> But it is difficult to see how this could logically be the case since they maintain that the universal soul is the prime mover, that is, the cause of the movement of the spheres. In at least one place in their Epistles, however, their language suggests that the separation of the universal soul from the body of the universe is the cause, not the effect, of the stopping of the movement of the spheres



and, thus, of the death of the universe.<sup>113</sup>

The Brethren also give a psychological account for the end of the world, that is, they offer a reason explaining why a time will come when the universal soul will leave the body of the universe. They liken the universal soul to a wise, virtuous man who undergoes a process of receiving knowledge and learning the virtues from a certain teacher. Once saturated with this knowledge, such an individual yearns for someone on whom he can bestow these moral and intellectual virtues. If he finds a student who is capable of accepting what he can offer him, he teaches him in the same way he was taught. A time, however, will come when he will fulfill this educational mission. He will then return to God, devoting his time to worshipping Him after having been up to that point totally preoccupied with the intellectual and moral instruction of his student.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, according to this analogy, the Brethren maintain that the universal soul united with matter, causing the movement of the spheres and the coming into existence of the world of generation and corruption, in order to render the world good and ultimately banish evil.<sup>115</sup> They define this good as the ability of the lower being to benefit from the attempts of the higher being to elevate it to its own place. The absolute good is thus the state when the whole world ascends to the "virtuous," which is the active intellect. Evil, on the other hand, is the inability of the being in a lower rank to perfect itself through accepting the benefits the being in the higher rank emanates on it.<sup>116</sup> The universal soul, they go on, united with prime matter in order to help it perfect itself and actualize its potentiality. When the goal is achieved, the reason for this union ceases and

the union itself will hence come to an end. By perfecting matter, the universal soul is at the same time fulfilling itself. Here the universal soul will ascend to the active intellect and will thus attain a state of "quiethood." The ascent of the universal soul to rejoin the active intellect is what they mean by the term resurrection here. The movement of the universe will consequently end.<sup>117</sup> Everything will thus perish save God and the active intellect.<sup>118</sup>

The Brethren argue that this will happen when all the particular souls, with the exception of a few, succeed in purifying and perfecting themselves intellectually and morally so that they can dispense with matter and attain the angelic rank to live as spiritual essences.<sup>119</sup> They hold that this will take place towards the end of the period of concealment, which started with Adam, and some time before the beginning of a second period of exposure.<sup>120</sup> The appearance of the "seventh leader" (al-ra'is al-sābī') will help this phenomenon take place.

The Brethren believe that the prophets were sent to remind the particular souls during the period of concealment that their real abode is with the intellect and not the body and to help them break away from their bodily chains. This earthly period of concealment is marked with the appearance of six prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad.<sup>121</sup> A seventh leader will complete the chain and end the period of concealment. The Brethren imply that this seventh leader will reveal the esoteric meaning hidden in the previous religions and will openly invite people to accept the true and unveiled knowledge he is teaching them. But how could this happen when there are people who are intellectually incapable of comprehending the true knowledge? The Brethren give us a clue

to the answer to this question in a passage where they advise the individuals who cannot use the demonstrative method themselves to trust the worthy teacher who can use it, to faithfully believe that what he is revealing to them is the truth and to accept it, hoping that, in time, they might be able to sharpen their intellectual abilities and verify it for themselves through demonstration.<sup>122</sup> This, however, does not resolve all difficulties in understanding their views with regard to this issue. For if this does not materialize, what would be the destiny of such souls?

In an attempt to answer this question, one should review what the Brethren have to say about the greater resurrection. The Brethren write that the seventh leader will invite people to his message warning them that it is their last chance to gain salvation. Most of the people, the Brethren argue, will accept his invitation and the state of good people (dawlat ahl al-khayr) will be established in place of the state of evil people (dawlat ahl al-sharr).<sup>123</sup> It is worth mentioning that, according to the Brethren's definition of "good" and "evil," the state of good people will be brought into existence by virtue of the acquisition of most of the people of knowledge and morals. After a certain period of time during which all those who are capable of accepting the kind of message preached by the seventh leader will respond to him, the universal soul will appear to judge particular souls. This is what the Brethren term the greater resurrection.

The Brethren write, in explaining the reason why the universal soul will depart from the body of the universe, that the wiseman is the one who ends what he is doing, not only when he has achieved what he had intended to do,

but also when he realizes that this aim cannot be fulfilled.<sup>124</sup> The implication is that the universal soul will abandon matter and unite with the intellect, not when all the particular souls acquire, through knowledge, the angelic form and discard matter, but mainly when no more souls are capable of actualizing their potentiality. The universal soul will then come to judge the particular souls. Those who have succeeded in actualizing their potentiality will hasten to unite with it.<sup>125</sup>

As for the fate of those who failed to intellectually perfect their potentiality, although they succeeded in morally purifying themselves by following the religious law, the Brethren were silent. One can, however, reason that they will simply perish. For, as they insisted on maintaining elsewhere, as long as particular souls do not actualize their potentiality through knowledge, they cannot be saved. Moral integrity, they hold, is insufficient for salvation and for gaining the angelic rank. Such souls, which are morally good but intellectually unfulfilled, would return, as we have mentioned, to the human form to be given a second chance.<sup>126</sup> One has to remember that this return to the human form is a return to a degree of hell and that the return to any corporeal form is, in itself, a form of punishment. But because when the greater resurrection occurs, the corporeal world, according to the Brethren, will cease to exist, it follows that its inhabitants, the people of hell, will perish with it. Only those who followed the message of the seventh leader will be saved. But the core of this message is true knowledge and those who cannot acquire it cannot reunite with the universal soul.<sup>127</sup> This is because failing to acquire true knowledge, they cannot

live the life of the spiritual independent of the corporeal. Hence, with the perishment of the corporeal, they will also perish.

As for the souls that fail both to intellectually perfect themselves and to follow the religious rules, the Brethren's language strongly implies that they will simply perish. When the world of generation and corruption ends, the return of the evil souls to corporeal forms will cease and the people of hell will, thus, be released.<sup>126</sup> But, unlike the virtuous souls, evil souls will not be allowed to unite with the universal soul. Because the universal soul, with which all the good souls will be united, will ascend to the intellect and unite with it, the absolute good will then be accomplished. Evil, which is the inability of the lower being to ascend to the rank of the next higher being, will, by definition, cease to exist. Evil and its party will thus perish. A state of absolute happiness and universal good will dominate.<sup>129</sup> This will be characterized by the existence only of God and the active intellect, his countenance (wajh), as all other beings will lose the reason for their independent existence.<sup>130</sup>

It now becomes clear that earthly life, the life of the body, is not the Brethren's ultimate concern. Their concern is with the destiny of the soul, beginning with its separation from the body, and beyond this, with the realization of ultimate happiness in a state of absolute good when the greater resurrection takes place.<sup>131</sup>

Acquisition of true knowledge is, for the Brethren, man's main vehicle for ascending to the angelic form and ultimately for attaining supreme happiness.<sup>132</sup> If food is the body's nurture which keeps it in good health, knowledge, the Brethren

maintain, is the soul's nurture that guarantees its immortality after the death of the body.<sup>133</sup> Although, as we have seen, the Brethren consider knowledge to be one of four things that help man attain salvation,<sup>134</sup> their constant reference to it -- more often than not, to the exclusion of the other three things -- leaves little doubt that they consider it the one thing that leads directly to salvation.<sup>135</sup> It is thus that, as we have seen, moral virtues alone are insufficient for attaining salvation. Moral virtues, together with true beliefs and good deeds, provide the suitable milieu that helps the soul in devoting itself to the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>136</sup>

Knowledge, by itself, has no merit for the Brethren. The only kinds of knowledge that have true value are those that contribute to the soul's discovery of its true vocation as a spiritual essence.<sup>137</sup> This is because such knowledge would provoke the soul to seek to rejoin its real abode and help it partake of the pleasures it experiences there independently of matter. By virtue of knowledge, the soul can also attain salvation when the greater resurrection occurs. The Brethren hold that while the universal soul has knowledge in actuality, the particular soul has knowledge only potentially. As the particular soul acquires knowledge it enters the process of actualization, and as it acquires more knowledge it becomes closer to the universal soul. Consequently, when the greater resurrection occurs, it is these knowledgeable particular souls that respond to the invitation of the universal soul and reunite with it.<sup>138</sup>

The Brethren hold as worthy every kind of knowledge that contributes towards this end.<sup>139</sup> They, however, maintain that man's knowledge of himself

as a body and a soul is the most worthy kind.<sup>140</sup> This is because this knowledge, when attained, will act as man's chief clue to two things. The first is knowledge of the universe,<sup>141</sup> for the Brethren always stress the parallelism between man and the universe. Man, for them, is nothing but a small universe.<sup>142</sup> They argue that because the human souls belong to the particular beings, they cannot encompass the universal beings. Hence, they go on, God made the human being in the likeness of the universe to facilitate for the particular soul the process of acquiring knowledge of the abstract, universal beings.<sup>143</sup> The second is knowledge of the divine. This, they hold, is the highest kind of knowledge. It is the ultimate goal of the process of acquiring knowledge.<sup>144</sup> Psychology, they write, is the first step towards speculation about the divine since "he who knows his soul, knows his Creator" or "he who knows himself best, knows his Creator best."<sup>145</sup>

To that end, the particular soul possesses many faculties. First, the Brethren hold, every human being has: a) a vegetative soul whose function is nutrition and growth; b) an animal soul whose function is sensation and movement; c) a rational soul whose function is reasoning and discernment.<sup>146</sup> Although each of these faculties is called a soul, the Brethren explain that they are but faculties of the particular soul. They liken the relation of the one soul to these faculties to one tree that has several branches, each branch having many leaves and fruits.<sup>147</sup> These three souls, according to the Brethren, must all cooperate, each submitting to the control of the higher.<sup>148</sup>

The Brethren then explain that each human soul possesses five sensitive faculties, namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch,<sup>149</sup> as well as five spiritual faculties, namely, the imaginative, the thinking, the retentive, the verbal and the productive.<sup>150</sup> From the five senses, impressions of the sensible objects are communicated to the imaginative faculty through the web of nerves that extends from the sense organs to different parts of the brain. The imaginative faculty, located in the front part of the brain, then transmits these impressions to the thinking faculty, located in the centre of the brain. When the sensible objects cease to exist, their impressions continue to exist in an abstract form in the thinking faculty. The thinking faculty ponders upon and judges these impressions and verifies their objects of reference, quantities, qualities, characteristics, benefits and what is harmful about them. As for the abstract forms of the intelligibles, the soul extracts them by virtue of its thinking faculty and imprints them in itself. After conceptualizing both the sensible and the intelligible information, the thinking faculty stores this in the retentive faculty, located in the rear part of the brain.<sup>151</sup> At the appropriate time, the thinking faculty refers the needed data to the verbal faculty through which the data is expressed in speech. Because these verbal expressions are transmitted through the air and exist up to the point they are heard, but not beyond it, God supports the thinking faculty by the productive, through which the speech is recorded in writing.<sup>152</sup>

At birth, the soul is like a white sheet of paper because it has knowledge only in potentiality.<sup>153</sup> The soul actualizes its potentiality and acquires knowledge in three ways. The first is through the senses and this means is used by the



soul to know things, like matter, that are inferior to itself in rank. The second is the intellectual way through which the soul knows itself and its essence. The third way is the demonstrative which is the soul's means for knowing, by analogy and deduction, the things higher than itself in rank, like God, the active intellect and the angels.<sup>154</sup> The Brethren believe that these ways are hierarchically ordered and temporally graded. Knowledge through the senses is, for them, the first step towards any higher kind of knowledge. This is because "whatever the senses do not grasp in a way or another the imagination cannot imagine, and what the imagination cannot imagine the intellects cannot comprehend, and if there is something that is not comprehended then it cannot be proved."<sup>155</sup> This, they argue, is the reason why the particular soul is in need of the body and its senses in order to mount to the knowledge of the divine which, on the contrary, is acquired through demonstration.

Men, however, differ in their abilities to use any of these three ways. The Brethren present in their Epistles more than one reason which, they believe, determines the human capacity to learn. These reasons are listed in different places. The classification of some seems to be epistemological, of others sociological and psychological; but they are not carefully worked out. They are as follows: a) subtleties and mysteries of the sciences; b) the diversity of the methods of attaining knowledge; c) the strength or weakness of the perceptive faculties<sup>156</sup>; d) the differences in people's professions; e) the differences in people's morals, dispositions and customs; f) the differences in the orders of the religions that govern them, the doctrines of their ancestors and the opinions of their teachers<sup>157</sup>;

g) the differences in the climates of the regions they inhabit.<sup>158</sup> It is obvious that, in the light of the Brethren's astronomical beliefs, some of these factors constitute hindrances beyond man's control.<sup>159</sup> The Brethren, however, seem to be offering a solution to this determinism in at least one place in their Epistles where they insist that man's happiness and salvation depends not on the actual attainment of true knowledge, but on his endeavouring to acquire such knowledge, regardless of whether he succeeds or not.<sup>160</sup> This again is in contrast with the ideas they presented elsewhere in their Epistles to the effect that the acquisition of true knowledge, which, in their scheme, is identical with the esoteric meaning of religions, is the only way of attaining happiness. This idea that reward depends on the endeavour to attain true knowledge (whether or not one in fact attains it), however, helped the Brethren shape their views concerning prophecy.

The Brethren argue that many people either live under circumstances unfavourable for intellectual achievement or do not live long enough to develop their intellectual and moral capacities to the utmost. Thus, they go on, God sends His prophets so that such men can acquire these virtues by following the laws and customs enunciated by the prophets.<sup>161</sup> Even if men were to live a natural term of life, the Brethren reason, not every human being is able to apprehend independently such things as the true nature of the particular soul, its role and place in the universe, its true abode, the happenings of the hereafter or the nature of the spiritual beings.<sup>162</sup> They explain that by virtue of acquiring an intermediate rank in the hierarchy of creation, that is, being halfway between the angelic and the bestial ranks, man's knowledge is also halfway between the

total apprehension of the former and the total ignorance of the latter. Consequently, they continue, man's reason cannot grasp such immense, subtle, pure concepts as those of God's essence, of the form of the whole universe or of the abstract and separate forms.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, they argue that man's senses are incapable of grasping things in the process of their development, but can only grasp them in the state of completion. As such, man is incapable of grasping such things as the origin of the universe and, consequently, the reason for its coming-into-being, since the senses, which are the first step towards acquiring knowledge, are restricted to knowing these things only at the completed stage. Thus, the only way for man to learn about such things is to actually know them first and then to start speculating about them.<sup>164</sup> But man cannot know such things without being informed about them by God through His prophets. To illustrate their point, the Brethren state that, without being informed through religions about the story of Adam and Iblis and about the destiny of the soul and its reward and punishment, reason alone, independent of revelation, could never have arrived at the knowledge that the world has a beginning and an end.<sup>165</sup> The Brethren thus conclude that in such sublime matters which cannot be experienced by the senses and, hence, cannot be deduced by reason, it is incumbent on man to resort to the prophets and to accept what they teach. The Brethren hold that the prophets have given proofs and signs and have performed miracles which demonstrate that the knowledge they have is received directly from God through His angels who also act as their mentors. Hence, the Brethren maintain, man has to accept, unquestionably, the teachings of the prophets.<sup>166</sup>

It should not be inferred, however, that this unquestionable acceptance of the teachings of the prophets as embodied in the religious law is the ultimate degree of knowledge man ought to pursue. What the Brethren are advocating is the unquestionable acceptance of those things reported by the prophets unattainable by sensuous experience or reason.<sup>167</sup> Speculating about the true nature and meaning of the things reported by the prophets is, however, stressed by them as being the real objective of human knowledge. Man, they argue, cannot acquire true knowledge without first acquiring belief. Belief (imān) in general, they write, is to accept what a reporter reports even if this cannot be grasped by the senses or comprehended by reason. Knowledge (‘ilm) is to apprehend the true meaning of things and to actually abstract the forms and imprint them in the soul.<sup>168</sup> The prophets, they state, ask people to believe first and then to pursue true knowledge. Those who set forth to speculate about the true nature of things without first being believers end up, according to them, by going astray and by holding such false concepts as the eternity of the world.<sup>169</sup> Those who start as believers and then try to acquire true knowledge but fail are rewarded for their attempts.<sup>170</sup> Those who start as believers and then succeed through their pursuit of true knowledge and the practice of moral virtues in attaining the perfection of their souls are "the true winners" who gain everlasting bliss. These are the philosophers.<sup>171</sup>

The Brethren classify people into three groups: the elite (al-khawāṣṣ), the masses (al-‘awāmm) and the middlers (al-mutawassitūn).<sup>172</sup> The members of all three groups must accept, according to the Brethren, the teachings of the prophets

that are embodied in the revealed books. The Brethren write that in the case of the Qur'ān, in particular, the revealed word is expressed in a language that can be understood according to the intellectual capability of each of the three groups.<sup>173</sup>

Paradise and hell, for example, are described in some verses in sensuous terms which the masses can understand. In other verses, they are described in a language that is intermediate between the sensuous and the spiritual, meant for the members of the middle class, while in other verses the descriptions are entirely spiritual, comprehended only by the elite. Both the intermediate and spiritual descriptions are also intended to stimulate thinking about such issues as the hereafter.<sup>174</sup>

The Qur'ān, according to the Brethren, has an exoteric and an esoteric meaning.<sup>175</sup> It is full of symbolic representations that point to the fact without revealing it and hence these have to be interpreted allegorically.<sup>176</sup> They, however, reserve this task for the elite and warn against revealing any of the secrets of these interpretations to the members of the other two groups.<sup>177</sup> The masses, the Brethren write, should accept the teachings of the prophet as embodied in the Qur'ān literally. Their level of understanding religious matters does not go beyond the basic affirmations of faith and the prescriptions of worship like praying, fasting, alms giving and similar external acts. The middlers, on the other hand, go beyond this to pursue the sciences of jurisprudence and exegesis, and to contemplate religious dogma and study just conduct, basing such study on a literal understanding of the Qur'ān. The elite, on the other hand, should seek

knowledge of the divine, employing the highest and most perfect method, that of demonstration. The domain of their inquiry is the inner meaning of religion which encompasses its well-kept secrets.<sup>178</sup>

Because the Brethren hold that philosophy does nothing more than unlock the secrets of the Qur'ān, revealing its mysterious symbolism,<sup>179</sup> they are able to adopt a doctrine of the harmony between philosophy and religion. The Brethren write that the ultimate aim of the teachings of the prophets, as well as those of the philosophers, is one and the same, namely, to save the soul from the tribulation of its union with the body and to guide it to the bliss of the hereafter.<sup>180</sup> The incompatibility of the teachings revealed to the prophets as embodied in the religious book with the rational teachings of the philosophers as embodied in their sciences is more apparent than real. According to the Brethren, this seeming incompatibility is due either to the reliance of the specialists in the science of religious law on the exoteric meaning of the Qur'ān, or to the inability of the novices in philosophy to understand the true and inner meaning of religion.<sup>181</sup>

Despite this, and despite the great emphasis the Brethren put on religion and on the importance of believing in its tenets and accepting its rules and regulations even among the philosophers, their writings convey the impression that philosophical knowledge occupies a higher rank in their scheme. Religious knowledge is important as a starting point, but philosophical knowledge is the ultimate aim. It is true that they write that the acquisition of intellectual knowledge without attaining belief in religious tenets is analogous to a soul that

yearns for a body through which it can actualize its potentiality. But they also write that belief that does not lead to philosophical knowledge is as useless as a body without a soul.<sup>182</sup> One should note here the analogy they draw between religion and body, on the one hand, and philosophy and soul, on the other. Because, as we have seen, the body acts as the soul's tool for acquiring knowledge, it follows that, according to this analogy, religion acts as the tool which philosophy employs to mount to the attainment of intellectual knowledge.

It is this arrival at intellectual knowledge that makes the Brethren consider philosophy as being an all encompassing discipline which, according to them, embraces both religion and science.<sup>183</sup> Its religious aspect reveals itself in the upholding of the belief in God's existence and unity, in the acceptance of the rules and regulations of the religious law and in the practising of the external acts of worship. As a science, it aims at the knowledge of the true nature of things, their causes and effects.<sup>184</sup> This all encompassing nature of philosophy, as they see it, places it very high in their esteem. Thus, they define it as "emulating God to the extent of human capacity."<sup>185</sup>

It can now be inferred that, according to the Brethren, in order for an individual to be endowed with the gift of prophecy, he must first acquire philosophy in its broadest sense, that is, as a religion and science. The particular souls in the Brethren's scheme are ranked in five ascending categories, the lowest being the vegetative, followed by the animal soul, then the rational human soul, the philosophic (or wise), angelic soul (al-nafs al-hikmiyah al-malakiyah) and finally (the prophetic) sacred, legal soul (al-qudsiyah al-namūsiyah).<sup>186</sup> In this

scheme, the soul cannot ascend to a higher rank unless it passes through the lower ones, fulfilling their requirements to the utmost. From this one must infer that the rank of lawgiving or prophethood cannot be reached unless the individual becomes first a philosopher. Thus, every prophet, in the Brethren's scheme, is a philosopher, and the prophet Muḥammad, although sent to an unphilosophical community, possessed philosophical knowledge.<sup>187</sup> The converse, that every philosopher is a prophet, however, is not true. The Brethren hold that the elevation from the rank of a philosopher to that of a prophet is due to divine pre-election.<sup>188</sup> Since the true philosophers strive after intellectual perfection and moral integrity, they are the closest among mankind to the angels and, as such, are the only candidates capable of communicating with the angels and accepting their inspirations and revelations.<sup>189</sup> But God chooses from among these wise, angelic souls only the very few to make them His messengers to mankind.

Despite the divine pre-election and elevation of the prophet, the Brethren maintain that philosophy and religion are both divine (amran ilāhiyān).<sup>190</sup> This is not inconsistent with their epistemological views; for they maintain that the prophet acquires prophetic knowledge, whether as revelation or through dreams, by means of his thinking faculty, that is, by the same faculty by which the philosopher acquires his knowledge.<sup>191</sup>

In the final analysis, the Brethren hold that the difference between the receiving of revelation and the acquisition of philosophical knowledge consists in the manner in which they are attained. For the prophet, having gone beyond the philosophical stage, now receives knowledge directly from the angels, whereas



the ordinary philosopher continues to acquire knowledge through deliberation and the demonstrative method.<sup>192</sup> Consequently, there is a difference in the class of people they address; for, while philosophical knowledge, by virtue of its nature, is kept from the masses, prophetic knowledge is meant for these masses.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, while the philosopher can claim that whatever knowledge he arrives at or opinion he formulates or book he writes is due to his own intellectual endeavour, the prophet qua prophet cannot claim any of these to himself. He must rather relate them to the angels who act as the mediators between him and God.<sup>194</sup>

It is by virtue of this direct communication with the angels and of his being chosen to disclose God's message to all mankind that the Brethren rank the prophet higher than the philosopher; or, to be more specific, it is this aspect of the prophet which relates him to the masses that really distinguishes him from the philosopher. They write that the highest rank any particular soul can attain, barring the rank of the angels, is that of "giving laws" (wad' al-nawāmis).<sup>195</sup>

The Brethren's scattered accounts, however, on the nature of revelation and how the prophet receives it and translates it into laws are imprecise and conflicting. Revelation, they write, consists in reporting those things that cannot be grasped by the senses. It sparks in the prophetic soul without his intending it and without effort.<sup>196</sup> In one place they mention that the revelation which the prophet receives does not come in the form of words. Rather, what is revealed is the meanings which the angels transmit to the prophets in the form of signs

and promptings (ishārāt wa ihāʾāt). By virtue of the purity of his soul, the prophet receives these symbolic meanings and translates them into words in the language of the people he is sent to and in a manner comprehensible to all levels of the community.<sup>197</sup> In another place, however, revelation is not confined to meanings, but involves actual speech. Thus, they state that the soul can receive revelation in different ways: during sleep when the soul abandons the use of the senses and while awake, when the limbs and the senses calm down, either through the hearing of voices that transmit certain meanings or through hearing actual speech. In both cases, they hold, the prophet does not see any being.<sup>198</sup>

There are also discrepancies in their accounts of the faculty receptive of revelation. In one place in the Comprehensive Epistle they maintain that man receives revelation by virtue of the imaginative faculty.<sup>199</sup> In more than one other place, however, they explicitly state that the prophets receive revelation by virtue of the thinking faculty.<sup>200</sup> In enumerating the actions of the thinking faculty, the Brethren include receiving revelation and imagining dreams as being peculiar to it, an activity it does not share with any other faculty. Through dreams it learns about future events and can thus either give warning or foretell good tidings. Through receiving revelation, it gives laws and embodies them in sacred books whose esoteric meanings are not hidden from the thinking faculty itself, apparently, by virtue of its other actions that include inference, analogy, deliberation and discernment.<sup>201</sup> As for "true vision" (al-ruʾiyah al-ṣādiqah), which they consider the first quality of prophecy,<sup>202</sup> they never mention how it takes place. Beyond these incidental and conflicting remarks, they offer no further

account of the nature of prophecy.

What is important, however, is their insistence that the prophet per se is principally a lawgiver (wādi' al-sharī'ah) who reveals religious law in the language of the community he is sent to in order to guide it towards happiness. This legal aspect of the revealed religion is what will affect the transmission of the prophet from being only a prophet to becoming also a king who establishes a state.

Thus, we must now turn to the Brethren's political ideas.

## ENDNOTES

1. According to the Brethren, the science of numbers is the first effusion that overflows from the universal intellect to the universal soul. It is also the science that allows man to grasp the essence of "Unity" and hence it is an essential component in man's programme of knowledge whose ultimate end is the knowledge of the divine. For a useful discussion of the Brethren's mathematical presuppositions, see Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, pp. 166-71; Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, pp. 46-52; Awa, L'Esprit, pp. 58ff.
2. RIS, 1:54-55, 199; 3:181, 233-36.
3. RIS, 1:49.
4. RIS, 3:237.
5. RIS, 1:54-55.
6. RIS, 3:201.
7. RIS, 1:158; RJ, 2:351.
8. RIS, 3:196.
9. RIS, 3:337.
10. RIS, 3:338.
11. RIS, 3:351.
12. RIS, 1:28, 277; 2:87, 458; 3:346, 464-65. As I read the Brethren, they are speaking here of the creation of the world in general, starting with the Universal Intellect. The creation of the world of generation and corruption was not ex-nihilo and happened in time. The Brethren make a fine distinction between three terms that relate to the issue of creation, namely, khalq, san'ah and ibdā'. While khalq means the bringing about of something out of something else, san'ah means the existence of the form in the matter and ibdā' means to bring about something out of nothing. See RIS, 3:472-73.

13. RIS, 2:46-47, 88; 3:339.
14. RIS, 2:114-16; 3:332, 455-56, 520.
15. Note that elsewhere in the Epistles the Brethren assign to nature the fourth rank in the descending hierarchy of macrocosmic beings. See RIS, 3:56. But, because wherever they mention the four ranks of being that constitute the supra natural category, they point to prime matter as being in the fourth rank, we opted for placing nature in the fifth rank.
16. RIS, 3:181, 202.
17. RIS, 3:56.
18. RIS, 1:53.
19. RIS, 1:53, 54; 3:187, 197, 352.
20. RIS, 3:197.
21. RIS, 3:187, 196, 197, 352.
22. RIS, 3:197.
23. RIS, 3:187, 197.
24. RIS, 3:352.
25. Check RIS, 3:36, 185-86, 197, 352-53.
26. RIS, 3:197. Note that Farrūkh wrongly states that the nine stages of universal beings came into existence by emanation. See Farrūkh, Ikhwan al-Safā, pp. 295-96.
27. See pp. 27-29 above.
28. RIS, 3:353.
29. RIS, 3:36.
30. RIS, 3:185-86. Note that they did not make it clear whether they are speaking here about prime matter or about secondary matter.

31. RIS, 3:36, 353.
32. RIS, 3:353.
33. RIS, 3:185.
34. See RIS, 3:36.
35. RIS, 3:197.
36. RIS, 3:187. According to this statement they count the spheres as nine. However, elsewhere they state that altogether there are eleven spheres. When they do this they are usually adding to the above mentioned spheres, the sphere of the air (Kurat al-hawā') and the sphere of the earth (Kurat al-ard). See RIS, 3:197.
37. RIS, 3:285-86; RJ, 1:145.
38. RIS, 2:34.
39. In at least one place the Brethren write that the outermost sphere moves as a result of its yearning for its cause, i.e. the Universal Soul. See RIS, 4:240.
40. RIS, 2:34; 4:240.
41. RIS, 3:188.
42. RIS, 1:137.
43. RIS, 2:180; 3:188.
44. RIS, 2:180-83.
45. RIS, 2:63-64, 124.
46. See RIS, 3:56, 181, 202. Compare with RIS, 3:187, 196-98. For an exposition of the problems posed by the contradictions in the Brethren's discussion of the concept of nature, see Widengren, Pure Brethren, pp. 61ff.
47. RIS, 3:190-91.

48. RJ, 2:343-44.
49. RJ, 1:122, 175; 2:354.
50. RJ, 1:175.
51. RJ, 1:166.
52. RJ, 1:173-74.
53. RIS, 1:212; 4:123; RJ, 1:154.
54. RJ, 1:102, 146; 2:354.
55. RIS, 1:318; 3:246, 424-25; RJ, 1:68, 69, 70.
56. RJ, 1:154-55. Note that the Brethren explain that, by regaining knowledge, they do not mean recollection in the Platonic sense, but rather that the human soul is potentially knowledgeable and that through learning it becomes actually knowledgeable. See RIS, 3:424.
57. RJ, 1:81ff., 166, where they explicitly state that the story of the fall of the particular souls is given in the Qur'an.
58. RIS, 2:228; RJ, 1:85.
59. RJ, 1:85.
60. RJ, 1:84-85.
61. RJ, 1:66-67, 86.
62. The use of the term "Iblīs" and not "Satan" here is dictated by the fact that the Brethren make a distinction between Iblīs and satans (shiātīn). Just as Adam, as an individual, is distinct from his offspring, the human beings (banū Adam), the Brethren hold that Iblīs is an individual who belongs to the species of jinn and that his offspring are satans.
63. The Brethren explain that the period when the angels inhabited the earth was preceded by a period when the jinn were its inhabitants. When God willed that the period of the dominance of the jinn should be terminated,

Iblis was a child. Hence, the angels took him and looked after him. This is their explanation for how Iblis, whom they hold to be one of the jinn, lived among the angels as is portrayed in the Qur'an. See RIS, 2:228.

64. Note that the Brethren hold elsewhere that paradise where Adam used to live is on earth at the top of a mountain near the equator. See RIS, 2:229. This is in conformity with their teaching that Adam originated near the equator where the best climatic conditions exist. See RIS, 2:181, 282. It is also in conformity with their belief that paradise mentioned in the Qur'an as a reward for the good souls is but a symbol, because unusual pleasures, as well as, animals, fruits and gardens, do not exist in the world of the spheres.
65. RJ, 1:67-70, 72-74, 85ff; RIS, 2:228-31.
66. See, for example, RIS, 1:100; 2:21.
67. RJ, 1:127-28.
68. RIS, 3:195-96.
69. RJ, 1:75-76, 120-21.
70. RIS, 3:39-40.
71. RIS, 1:21-22; RJ, 1:121-22.
72. RIS, 3:49.
73. RJ, 1:121, 176.
74. RIS, 3:49; RJ, 1:102, 119, 176. For a comparison between his rank and that of the plants and the animals, see RJ, 1:163.
75. RJ, 2:316.
76. RIS, 2:60; 3:63, 397-98.
77. RIS, 3:61-62, 73.



78. RIS, 3:63-66; RJ, 1:102-03.
79. RIS, 3:294, 397.
80. RIS, 3:294.
81. RIS, 2:9; 3:32; 4:108, 109; RJ, 1:176..
82. RIS, 1:318; 3:41.
83. RIS, 1:294; 3:5-6, 294; 4:108ff.; RJ, 1:122; 2:232, 332.
84. RIS, 1:104; 2:21; 3:8-9, 65; 4:108. Note that they made it clear that the soul must witness this during the earthly life in order to be saved. See RIS, 1:137-38; 2:60; 4:80, 83.
85. RIS, 4:120, 138; RJ, 1:125-26.
86. RIS, 4:112-13; RJ, 2:319-20.
87. RIS, 2:50; 3:16.
88. RIS, 2:455.
89. RIS, 3:6-7.
90. RIS, 4:110; RJ, 1:158-59.
91. RIS, 4:110-11.
92. RIS, 3:79-80; 4:110-11.
93. RIS, 2:50; 3:17.
94. RIS, 2:317.
95. RIS, 1:137; 3:17, 79.
96. RIS, 1:137; 3:80; 4:111; RJ, 2:512.
97. RIS, 1:211-12; 4:139; RJ, 1:139.
98. RIS, 4:138-39.

99. RIS, 3:7ff., 79-80.
100. RIS, 1:137.
101. See, for example, RIS, 1:212, 320; 4:121; RJ, 1:191-93.
102. RIS, 1:211-12, 320; 3:397-98, 504; 4:120-21, 139; RJ, 1:142.
103. RIS, 4:120-21.
104. RIS, 1:88; 2:50; 3:333-34.
105. RIS, 3:305.
106. RIS, 3:300-01. The Brethren's discussion of the resurrection of bodies is obscure and sometimes the wording might imply that they believe in the resurrection of bodies. See, for example, RIS, 4:243; RJ, 1:295. Compare with RJ, 2:329, for example. But, seen in the light of their general cosmological and psychological ideas, one can conclude that they do not believe in the literal meaning of the resurrection of bodies.
107. RIS, 3:300-01; RJ, 2:329-30.
108. RJ, 1:225.
109. RJ, 2:384, 411.
110. RIS, 2:40; RJ, 1:88.
111. RIS, 2:88; 3:333; RJ, 2:489.
112. RIS, 2:88; 3:333.
113. RIS, 3:354.
114. RIS, 3:354-55.
115. RJ, 1:51.
116. RJ, 1:49-50.
117. RJ, 1:51-52; 2:384, 411, 489.

118. RIS, 1:37.
119. RJ, 1:75-76; 2:488-89.
120. RJ, 1:126-27; 2:463.
121. RJ, 1:148; 2:404-11, 463, 519ff.
122. RIS, 4:66.
123. RJ, 1:90; 2:449, 464-65; RIS, 4:171.
124. RIS, 3:339-40.
125. RJ, 1:88, 197; 2:355-56, 360, 441, 464ff., 489.
126. RIS, 4:138.
127. RIS, 2:60.
128. RJ, 1:51, 123; 2:445, 488-89.
129. RJ, 1:50-51, 52, 75-77, 87-88, 122-23; 2:384, 489.
130. RIS, 1:37.
131. RIS, 3:40; 4:169; RJ, 2:507, 508.
132. RIS, 4:386.
133. RIS, 1:399; 3:19, 306.
134. RIS, 1:350; 2:449; 3:11, 16.
135. RIS, 1:167-68, 399; 4:386.
136. RIS, 1:167-68, 449; 4:9, 13, 108-09, 158, 171, 217, 386-87.
137. In the Comprehensive Epistle, they write that not all kinds of knowledge are good. It is only those kinds that help the soul in its search for the divine sciences that are worthy of being sought after. See RJ, 2:425.
138. RIS, 1:399.

139. RIS, 4:83.
140. RIS, 3:188-89; 4:83.
141. RIS, 3:20.
142. RIS, 3:188.
143. RJ, 1:261.
144. RIS, 1:76; 2:21; RJ, 2:435.
145. RIS, 1:76.
146. RIS, 3:68.
147. RIS, 3:68.
148. Al-‘Abd, al-Insan, p. 169.
149. RIS, 2:401-10; RJ, 1:269-72.
150. RIS, 2:414ff.; RJ, 1:272-73.
151. RIS, 3:10, 243.
152. RIS, 2:414-15; 3:243-45.
153. RIS, 3:457.
154. RIS, 2:402-03, 415-16; 3:232.
155. RIS, 3:424.
156. RIS, 3:404.
157. RIS, 3:425-26.
158. RJ, 1:40.
159. Examine, for example, RIS, 1:290, 299, 303; 2:350-51; 3:532-33; RJ, 1:186ff.
160. RJ, 1:40-41.
161. RIS, 2:454-55.

162. RIS, 1:343.
163. RIS, 3:20-22.
164. RIS, 3:23.
165. RIS, 4:100-01.
166. RIS, 3:23.
167. They single out five tenets, namely, belief in God, belief in angels, belief in prophets, belief in the transcendent source of revelation, belief in the hereafter. See RIS, 3:452-54; 4:67.
168. RIS, 3:293.
169. RIS, 4:262; RJ, 2:453.
170. RJ, 1:40.
171. RIS, 3:452-53; 4:61-66, 109-10, 261-63.
172. RIS, 3:511.
173. RIS, 3:77, 488; 4:122. Note that the Brethren believe that this is a unique feature of the Qur'an because Muhammad, unlike Jesus, for instance, was addressing illiterate people who were not trained in the sciences. The people to whom Jesus was sent were enlightened by the Tawrah and by the books of the philosophers. See RIS, 3:77-78.
174. RIS, 3:76-78.
175. RIS, 3:511; 4:67.
176. RIS, 2:21.
177. RIS, 2:210, 343-44; 3:61-62.
178. RIS, 3:76, 511-12; 4:66.
179. RJ, 1:36.

180. RIS, 1:211.
181. RIS, 3:29.
182. RJ, 1:288-89.
183. RIS, 3:29.
184. RJ, 1:60-61.
185. See RIS, 1:208, 290; RJ, 1:99.
186. RIS, 1:311-16. In fact, they classify particular souls into fifteen ranks, seven below the human rank and seven above it. They, however, maintain that only five of these ranks are known to the philosophers.
187. RIS, 3:263.
188. RIS, 1:154.
189. RIS, 2:10; 3:12-13; 4:116-17, 121-22.
190. RIS, 3:30.
191. RIS, 3:246, 421; 4:129.
192. RIS, 4:97-98, 330, 408-09.
193. RIS, 1:335.
194. RIS, 4:136.
195. RIS, 1:312; 4:120, 124, 125; RJ, 2:306.
196. RIS, 4:84.
197. RIS, 4:122.
198. RIS, 4:84.
199. Examine RJ, 2:322-23.
200. RIS, 3:13, 246, 421; 4:129.

201. RIS, 3:246, 421-22.

202. RIS, 4:125.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE BRETHREN OF PURITY

### I The Necessity of Communal Life

The Brethren hold that man is a social animal. Good life, for them, involves man's relations with others. In isolation, they write, man would lead a miserable life. This is because the normal span of man's life is too short to attain by himself all that he needs in order to live a comfortable life.<sup>1</sup>

The Brethren justify man's need to associate with others by upholding the notion of the universal man (al-insân al-kullî) or the absolute man (al-insân al-mutlaq). They define this man as the form of humanity which, since the creation of Adam, has acted as God's viceregent on earth.<sup>2</sup> This form will continue to exist until the greater resurrection takes place. Although as the form of the whole humanity it is one, it embraces all human beings as individuals. These individuals, who are numerous and transient, together constitute the universal, absolute man.<sup>3</sup>

In this universal man, all branches of knowledge, all kinds of professions and crafts and all types of morals exist collectively.<sup>4</sup> Hence, no one man can individually acquire all the knowledge, perform all the professions or possess all moral virtues, as these are dispersed among all human beings.<sup>5</sup> Man, thus, is in need of his fellow human beings in order to acquire worldly perfection. This worldly perfection, in turn, is necessary for the attainment of happiness in the life to come.<sup>6</sup> In other words, man's salvation cannot be effected except in a communal milieu. This conception, as we shall see, greatly shapes their political ideas



regarding the state.

It is true that the Brethren maintain that man's activities should be ultimately directed towards what will bring happiness to his soul after its separation from the body. But they also maintain that one of these activities should be the fulfillment of the material needs of the body during the earthly period. This is because, as detailed earlier, there is no road to heaven other than this world. No human soul can reach the hereafter unless it undergoes worldly existence through the medium of a body. But man, according to the Brethren, fulfills himself to the utmost, thus living up to the rank of humanity, and becomes worthy of acquiring the angelic form only when he attains perfection of his soul and body alike.<sup>7</sup>

The Brethren define happiness in the hereafter as the existence of the soul everlastingly in the most perfect state. This presupposes happiness in this life which, according to them, consists in the existence of every human being (body and soul) in the most perfect state as long as possible.<sup>8</sup> In the light of this, the Brethren hold that fulfillment of material needs is legitimate, provided they are moderate, as they help man achieve a well-balanced life. But the fulfillment of these needs calls for man's association with others, each performing the one profession he is well equipped to do and all helping each other live a good, comfortable life.<sup>9</sup> Man's association with others is also necessitated by his need to acquire knowledge in order to attain salvation. Because knowledge is dispersed among all human beings and because man's intellectual perfection depends on the quantity and quality of knowledge he possesses, he needs the help of his fellow

men in order to acquire as much knowledge as his intellectual capacity permits.<sup>10</sup>

Human beings thus come together to form social gatherings in order to perform the utmost perfection possible on this earth. This earthly perfection is, however, ultimately motivated by the desire to attain perfection of the soul. To pursue this world for itself is evil. To seek it as a means for the realization of the salvation of the soul in the hereafter is the only good. This can help explain the religious tone that is very evident in the Brethren's discussions of human gatherings and the state. Thus, although they argue that human associations are necessitated by man's material and intellectual needs, they write that it is God who embedded in human nature the intimacy (ulfah) and love (mawaddah) that make humans come together to form social gatherings.<sup>11</sup> But, in order for man to lead a happy life he must, according to them, not only associate with others in a social gathering, but must also abide by a body of religious laws.<sup>12</sup> It is thus that, although the ultimate aim of human gatherings is religious, these gatherings are also political. People gather to form states. But, as indicated, these states are religious and the main task of their leadership is to guarantee the enforcement of the religious law.<sup>13</sup>

## II The Nature of the State and the Cyclical Theory of History

The appearance of these religious states, according to the Brethren's scheme, is inevitable. The Brethren, as we have seen, believe that the period of existence of the world of generation and corruption is a period of concealment of true knowledge. Man's salvation, however, depends on his attainment of this knowledge.

But human beings are incapable of capturing true knowledge without guidance. Hence, God sends his prophets with His revelations. During this period of concealment six leading prophets and a seventh leader appear. Each of these leaders becomes the source of wisdom and knowledge during his time. The first six prophets reveal religious laws. After the death of each of these prophets the religious law is guarded by his successors and hence supervenes for a determined period of time. Eventually immorality and ignorance prevail. Sectarian conflicts tear people apart. God then wills that a new prophet come forth with a new version of the religious law that supersedes the previous one. The seventh leader completes the chain and reveals the hidden truth. Hence, the period of concealment ends, the world of generation and corruption terminates, and the greater resurrection takes place.<sup>14</sup>

The succession of these seven leaders and their establishment of religiously based states is sanctioned by divine providence. This providence expresses itself in the astral conjunctions of the stars<sup>15</sup> and, hence, is inevitable. The Brethren developed these beliefs into an intricate theory of historical "stages and cycles" (akwār wa adwār). They write that, like everything on this earth, states undergo an inevitable cycle of rise and decline.<sup>16</sup> Every state, they explain, is destined to be born at a certain time to grow and prosper. When it reaches the highest limit of its prosperity, the process is reversed and its decline starts. At the same time, power is resumed in another state. Every day that passes adds to the strength of this rising state in proportion to the amount of power that is being lost by the decaying one. Inevitably the time will come when the old

state perishes completely and the new one totally prevails.<sup>17</sup> These cyclical changes in the fortunes of nations and states can take one of three forms: a) from one religion, to another which occurs once every one thousand years; b) from one nation to another, once every two hundred and forty years; c) from one king to another, once every twenty years.<sup>18</sup>

These forms of cyclical change that distinguish between religion and kingship might seem to contradict what we mentioned earlier concerning the Brethren's belief in the religious character of the state. But an examination of the nature and role of leadership in their scheme will reveal that this contradiction is only apparent. It will show that the main feature of the state, according to them, continues to be religious regardless of the credibility of the religion that prevails in it. Transfer of leadership, either from one nation to another or from one king to the other, takes place within the all-encompassing frame of the religious state that is established by a prophet once every one thousand years. This prophet is succeeded by kings whose main task is to guard the religious law put by him. Some of these kings could be prophets themselves<sup>19</sup>, but, unlike the founder of the all-encompassing religious state, the leader of the cycle, they do not reveal religious laws. They only guard the religious law revealed by the founder. This continues until the religion decays. The deterioration of the religion inevitably leads to the fall of the state. This is because religion is its backbone, the reason for its birth and continuity. A new prophet then appears to reveal a new version of the religious law and to establish a religious state.

### III The Nature and Role of Leadership

The Brethren hold that religion and kingship differ in nature. The former, they maintain, is mainly concerned with the happiness of the soul in the hereafter. The latter, on the other hand, works for the welfare of the human beings in this worldly life.<sup>20</sup> But despite their differences, the Brethren continue, religion and kingship are closely related. They liken the relationship between them to that of twin brothers<sup>21</sup> and state that neither of them can exist without the other.<sup>22</sup> Kingship derives strength from the fact that people governed by it follow one religion.<sup>23</sup> Religion, on the other hand, continues to exist only by virtue of the power and authority of kingship which enforces the religious law on those who refuse to abide by it.<sup>24</sup> The Brethren, however, make it clear that religion comes into existence before kingship.<sup>25</sup> Religion, they write, acts as the foundation for kingship which, in its turn, acts as the guardian of religion.<sup>26</sup>

It is a prophet-lawgiver who reveals a religion. But, it needs a king to bring about a state in which this religious law will be applied and, hence, can live and prosper. Thus, the prophet-lawgiver must be a king also. The necessity of the political aspect of his role appears in their insistence that, if the lawgiver lacks the qualities of kingship, he must join forces with someone who enjoys these qualities.<sup>27</sup> This is necessitated, according to the Brethren, by the fact that man consists of a soul and a body. The Prophet qua prophet represents the highest rank any human being can attain by virtue of his soul. He thus can supervene only over the other human souls. To exercise control over the bodies, this calls for the office of kingship which represents the highest rank

any human being can reach by virtue of his bodily capabilities.<sup>28</sup> Despite this confession of the necessity of kingship, the Brethren are still eager to emphasize the religious aspect of the state. They write that because the soul is nobler than the body, the rank attained by virtue of the soul, that is, prophethood, far surpasses the rank attained by virtue of the body, that is, kingship.<sup>29</sup> God wills that both ranks join forces not simply for the sake of this earthly life, but ultimately for the sake of the hereafter.<sup>30</sup>

The Brethren differentiate between the qualities and duties of prophethood and those of kingship. The prophet-lawgiver, according to them, should enjoy certain qualities by nature. They mention in more than one place that these qualities are forty-six in number.<sup>31</sup> However, when they give a detailed list of them, they enumerate only twelve.<sup>32</sup> These are almost identical with the natural qualities of the first ruler of the virtuous regime enumerated by al-Fārābī in the Virtuous City and hence need not be repeated here.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to these qualities which the lawgiver enjoys by nature, he must acquire certain beliefs that should be included in the religion he reveals. These beliefs, according to the Brethren, are the main feature of his religious, as well as, political leadership. Thus, they write that, in order for the lawgiver to reveal a religious law complete with sayings, actions, commands and prohibitions, and in order to govern the state and rule the people both in religious and worldly matters, he must first subscribe, in all sincerity, to the following beliefs:<sup>34</sup>

(a) This world has a Creator who is eternal, living, knowing, wise and mighty. He is the cause of all existants and the manager of their affairs.

- (b) The existence of abstract intelligibles, each of independent essence, that perform specific duties assigned to them. These are God's angels who transmit God's message, revelations and reports.
- (c) The existence of the soul and that it sometimes exists separately from the body and sometimes with the body.
- (d) The soul continues to exist after separation from the body by itself, continuing in this state to be under the sovereignty of God.
- (e) Every existant is individually responsible for acquiring the virtues and that these depend on his deeds, opinions, morals and knowledge.
- (f) God demands of people what they are capable of doing, not that which is beyond their capacity.
- (g) There are rewards for the obedient and punishments for the disobedient. People must be told about these rewards and punishments.
- (h) There is a hereafter where every one is rewarded or punished in accordance with the acts for which he is responsible.
- (i) The highest duty deserving of the highest reward in the hereafter is calling people to God.
- (j) Those who call people to God represent the highest ranking among mankind.

These opinions, the Brethren continue, must not only be faithfully accepted by the prophet, but they must also be contemplated and conceived by his thinking faculty.<sup>35</sup> For, as has been noted earlier, the prophet is also a philosopher. In

the capacity of a prophet, his main aim is to lift the particular souls out of the rut of the corporeal.<sup>36</sup> Thus, his main duty is to reveal to the people these beliefs which he conceives and in which he believes. He should do this in a way appropriate to their different intellectual capabilities. With the elite, he explains these beliefs without resorting to symbolism. This symbolism should be reserved only for the masses. According to their degree of belief, as well as, the degree of their intellectual understanding of these religious issues, the prophet divides the members of the state into five Qur'anic inspired categories: the witnesses and believers (al-shuhadā' wa al-siddiqīn); the faithful (al-mu'minīn); the Muslims (al-muslimīn); the hypocrites (al-munāfiqīn); the unbelievers (al-kuffār).<sup>37</sup>

The functions of the lawgiver that emanate primarily from his religious role, as succinctly summed up by Enayat, are:

- 1) to propagate the faith, 2) arrange the Book in succinct phrases,
- 3) show how to recite it, 4) teach its literary and allegorical interpretations, 5) establish the Traditions, 6) cure ailing souls of false doctrines, feeble beliefs, bad morals and evil deeds, 7) put an end to their sorry state by making them aware of their vices, and teaching them sound opinions, noble morals and commendable acts, and inspiring in them the desire for the world beyond, 8) know how to deal with evil souls, and guide them to the right path, 9) know how to deal with neglectful, distracted and dormant souls by reminding them of the day of resurrection, 10) accomplish the Traditions in the Sharī'ah, 11) explain the Method (minhāj), 12) define what is legal, and what is illegal, 13) lay down the legal penalties and temporal laws in general, 14) teach piety, 15) set out the details of the laws governing the elite, the common people and the intermediary classes.<sup>38</sup>



In his role as king, the lawgiver aims mainly at enforcing the religious law and protecting it within the framework of a political regime.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in building the state he must: 1) know the dispositions, customs, morals and degree of knowledge of each of his subjects so that he can order them in ranks and assign to each the functions most appropriate to his capabilities.<sup>40</sup> The subjects are hierarchically organized each being a leader over those under him and, at the same time, submitting to and obeying those who are higher in rank than him.<sup>41</sup> 2) He must set a just and good example (sunnah) for his people to follow. In doing this, he must not serve the immediate welfare of his close followers, but the general welfare of the whole community during his lifetime and after his death.<sup>42</sup> 3) He must also instill in the community the spirit of love and cooperation so that they all become like one man with one body and one soul. The lawgiver will then become like the head, while they represent the different organs of the body. His soul will supervene over theirs as the thinking faculty supervenes and controls all the other faculties of the soul. Their opinions, methods and aims will thus become one and the same. Hence, their state will be the strongest.<sup>43</sup>

In order to enforce the law, on the other hand, his main functions are: 1) to distribute stipends (arzāq) among the soldiers and entourage; 2) to maintain the sea ports; 3) to fortify the frontiers; 4) to sign peace treaties and covenants with other kings; 5) to give gifts and money to followers of other religions to attract their hearts to the new one.<sup>44</sup> They also maintain that the lawgiver must sincerely believe that the most worthy of all deeds which wins salvation

for the soul and draws it closer to God is to sacrifice the body for the sake of establishing the religious law.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the Brethren write, it is the duty of the lawgiver to ask his followers to support and protect each other for the sake of the one religion they follow. He should order them to oppose and contradict the followers of other religious laws, and even to abandon them if they happen to be relatives.<sup>46</sup> This brings us to the question of jihād. Since their position on this issue has its points of comparison with that of al-Fārābī, some discussion of it is relevant.

#### IV The Theme of Jihād and the Universal State

The Brethren's tolerant attitude towards other religions, revealed and unrevealed alike,<sup>47</sup> is undeniable. Moreover, their acquaintance with the revealed scriptures is quite noticeable. Thus, one encounters in their text frequent citations from the Injil and Tawrah which they quote in support of their own views.<sup>48</sup> The life of Christ as portrayed by them in the Epistles corresponds to a considerable extent to that depicted in the gospels.<sup>49</sup> In one place they go as far as accepting the crucifixion of Christ, contrary to the Qur'anic teachings.<sup>50</sup> Praiseworthy references to Jesus, Moses, Abraham, as well as, Zacharia and John the Baptist are quite common.<sup>51</sup> Respect for the monks and their simple life is expressed.<sup>52</sup> In one place, the brother is advised by them to read the Bible,<sup>53</sup> in another, an advice is given to read certain verses from the Qur'ān, the Injil and the Tawrah.<sup>54</sup> In the epistle of the animals criticism is levelled against the deviation from all three revealed religions.<sup>55</sup> Elsewhere, they explicitly state that

reward and salvation await those who endeavour to attain true knowledge, regardless of the religion they follow.<sup>56</sup>

The Brethren express in their Epistles an unprejudiced philosophy that accepts differences between religions as normal and inevitable. They argue that, because the sender of all prophets is the one God, it follows that all prophets must have been preaching one and the same message.<sup>57</sup> Differences, according to the Brethren, are confined to the different methods these different religions use in order to fulfill their one mission.<sup>58</sup> These various methods, they continue, ensue from the differences in historical periods, environment, people's morals, dispositions and intelligence, as well as, from the nature of the ailments of the soul each religion seeks to remedy.<sup>59</sup> It is here that the Brethren make their clear distinction between religion (dīn) and religious law (sharī'ah). While religion as a "dogma" (ʿaqidah, that is, the set of religious beliefs as distinct from prescribed actions) is, for them, one and the same in all revealed religions; religious laws, on the other hand, as the rules and regulations that govern everyday life, differ from one religion to another.<sup>60</sup>

The Brethren's acceptance and tolerance of the differences among religions is expressed in their proclamation in many a passage to the effect that it is very difficult for the individual who is brought up following a certain religion and practising its acts of worship to discard it.<sup>61</sup> They thus conclude that people ought to stop wasting time and energy trying to point out the weaknesses in other religions.<sup>62</sup> Thus they proclaim "loser" (hālik) he who is inimical to followers of other religions or adopters of other doctrines. His soul will not be saved

and will experience continuous torment because he failed to purify himself from feelings of hatred, resentment and malice.<sup>63</sup> They thus advise their brother who aspires for intellectual perfection and salvation to avoid this reprehensible vice because it blinds men to the truth.<sup>64</sup> The saved (al-nāji), they state, must refrain from hurting others and must desire that everyone be saved and rewarded by God. Basing themselves on this, and on the premise that, even though truth is an essential component of any religion, all religions have their weak points, they advise their brothers to try and guide the followers of each religion to the truth, as presented in their own religion, instead of searching for and attacking the weak points of this religion.<sup>65</sup>

Despite this tolerant universalism towards other religions, their discussion of the relation between Islam and other religions takes a completely different tone when the concept of holy war (jihād) is brought up. Thus, while they abhor the individual who thinks it right to kill those who belong to a different religion, declaring that such a person cannot be one of the Brethren,<sup>66</sup> they maintain that one of the most praiseworthy passions (shahwah) of the animal soul is love of holy war.<sup>67</sup> They praise the man who sacrifices his soul for the triumph, establishment and spread of the religious law.<sup>68</sup> They insist that soldiers must have fanatical enthusiasm for the religion and earnest jealousy (ghayrah) for the inviolability of the religious law.<sup>69</sup> They proclaim that, if there is an inner jihād against the evil inherent in the soul, an outer jihād is due against those who abide by religious laws different from the Islamic.<sup>70</sup>

In order to justify this, the Brethren resort to the concept of religious law as being distinct from religion. They write that fighting "the people of the book" is not an attempt to force them to accept Islam as a dogma. They refer here to the Qur'anic proclamation that there is no enforcement in religion (la ikrāha fī al-dīn). The prophet, they state, invites people peacefully to follow the truth he is preaching. If they refuse, he asks them to pay the head tax (jizyah) and to abide by the regulations of the religious law that governs life within the Islamic society. If they refuse, he will then fight them. The fighting here is provoked solely by the necessity of making them abide by the body of law governing the everyday life of the community.<sup>71</sup> Their payment of the head tax is viewed by the Brethren as a means of making them constantly aware that the Muslims have the upper hand in the society.<sup>72</sup>

It is thus clear that, when the Brethren justify holy war, they are mainly thinking of Islam as a state or a political regime, not as a religion (in the sense of ‘aqidah). Indeed, they write in another place in their Epistles that fighting among people of different religions does not relate to the issue of religious beliefs, but only to political issues, as the followers of each religion try to impose a body of laws, that is, a certain type of government, on the other groups.<sup>73</sup>

It is obvious, however, that, from the Brethren's point of view, it is only Islam that is justified in fighting and in winning this political struggle. According to their cyclical theory of history, each major cycle starts with a prophet-lawgiver. Change from one cycle to the other is nothing but an orderly development whose end result is the betterment of the conditions of the world and the progress

of humanity.<sup>74</sup> The prophet Muhammad, according to them, is the last lawgiver.<sup>75</sup> Islam is hence considered by them as the consummation of God's word.<sup>76</sup> It represents the final stage of development on the basis of which the greater resurrection will take place.<sup>77</sup> If we remember now their argument that religion cannot survive without the power of kingship that enforces its religious laws, we can conclude that they believed that, in order for Islam to survive as the final and the best symbolic expression of God's truth, it has to launch a holy war that spreads the Islamic law and guarantees it the upper hand in governing the state and in ruling the followers of other religions within it.

Admittedly, it is difficult to see how this justification of the war against the followers of other religions is reconcilable with the tolerant attitude they assume in many other passages of their Epistles. An explanation can, nevertheless, be attempted. It seems that the Brethren's tolerance towards other religions is qualified and not absolute. Their tolerance is directed, not towards the other religions as bodies of law, but towards the dogma in these religions. In one place, they assume that, if the dogma in the other revealed religions is understood in its true sense, it will be found to be identical with that endorsed by Islam.<sup>78</sup> The language and symbols in which this dogma is expressed differ from one religion to the other because each religion addresses a different community. This does not mean that the dogma itself changes from one religion to the other; for the truth of God is one.<sup>79</sup> But this is not the case with the body of rules and regulations which each religion includes. Because the cyclical changes represent a chain of cosmic rationality that leads humanity towards gradual development.

each religious law renders the previous ones superfluous.<sup>80</sup> Individuals must thus abide by the rules of the most developed body of revealed laws. As for the dogmas, people can continue to accept them in the language and symbols of the previous religion. After all, it is the same dogma preached by Islam but dressed in a different garment. Thus, we can understand why they advise their brothers not to dispute the way the truth is represented in any religion.<sup>81</sup>

Although this is the kind of answer suggested by the text, it is not without difficulties. What this answer suggests is that, for Islam to survive as the final religion, it has to launch a holy war whose aim is to bring all followers of other religions under the political power of the Islamic law. However, according to at least one passage in the Epistles, the Brethren do not seem to adopt the notion of a universal state that follows a uniform body of laws, which is the underlying motive of the theme of the holy war. In many passages throughout the Epistles, the Brethren discuss the relation between the natural phenomenon and human civilizations. In these passages they point to the fact that the diversity in climates, which in its turn is determined by the different movements of the stars, leads to the inevitable appearance of different nations. These nations do not differ only with regard to the crafts or the colour of the complexion of their peoples, but also with regard to their dispositions, character, degree of intelligence, language, beliefs and religions.<sup>82</sup>

The essence of these fragmentary remarks regarding the inevitable existence of different distinct nations is to be found in the epistle of the animals. The King of the Jinn asks the leader of the humans about the reason that lies

behind the existence of different kings that rule human beings although they all belong to the same species. The answer is that the existence of different kings is necessitated by the inevitable distribution of mankind into various nations. The peculiarities of each nation, he goes on, calls for a different approach when dealing with them. This means that no one body of laws and no one form of government can be applied to all the human gatherings.<sup>83</sup> Thus, what the Brethren seem to be saying, according to this passage, is that a universal state that includes the totality of humanity, and which applies a uniform body of laws in all its regions, is impossible to materialize.<sup>84</sup> Of course, one might object by saying that this passage is referring to the rule of "kings" in particular, that is, the temporal leadership which, unlike the religious leadership, cannot be universal. However, one should notice that the Brethren, as mentioned earlier, conceive of the state as being primarily a religious structure, whether under the leadership of its founder, the prophet-lawgiver, or under the leadership of his successors. Although the latter, in certain cases, enjoy only the temporal qualities of leadership, their main task is to act as the guardians of the religious law trying to spread and enforce it. Admittedly, the Brethren's concept of jihād remains a problem in their philosophy. The issue, however, leads us to a consideration of another aspect of their political philosophy, namely the question of the succession to the prophet-lawgiver.



## V The Question of Succession to the Prophet-Lawgiver

According to the Brethren, when the lawgiver dies, the individual most worthy of succeeding him as leader of the state is the one who possesses all the forty-six qualities by virtue of which the lawgiver earned his position.<sup>85</sup> In the Comprehensive Epistle, the Brethren qualify this stand and state that the successor should possess all the qualities which the lawgiver enjoyed with the one exception of being receptive to revelation. To compensate for the inability to receive revelation, the Brethren insist that the successor should be well-versed in the religious law revealed by the founder of the state. He must also acquire knowledge of its allegorical interpretation.<sup>86</sup> This condition means, in effect, that the successor to the lawgiver must not only be a jurist (*faqīh*), but also a philosopher, since the Brethren hold that knowledge of the inner meaning of the Qur'an is a privilege of the philosophical elite.<sup>87</sup>

The Brethren, however, are quite practical and confess that the likelihood for such a man to exist after the lawgiver is extremely remote.<sup>88</sup> They suggest different solutions to this practical obstacle in different places of the Epistles. In one place, for example, they stress the legal abilities of the successor. Thus, they maintain that the kings who follow the lawgiver should be primarily concerned with maintaining the religious law.<sup>89</sup> This solution, however, poses some difficulties for the exegete. For example, one expects that maintaining the religious law would include its protection and enforcement through *jihād*. The Brethren, however, do not stress the physical and military prowess of the king as a necessary quality of his leadership. On the contrary, they insist that the king should rather

be politically wise and just.<sup>90</sup> Although their statement implies that the king could organize jihād without going himself into battle, this contrasts with al-Fārābī's views. Al-Fārābī, it should be recalled, includes the ability to launch holy war in person among the attributes of the first leader and those who succeed him.

A second solution suggested by the Brethren in another place clearly stems from their division of the task of the lawgiver into spiritual and temporal. They, thus, hold that not one, but two, rulers might be expected to succeed the lawgiver. The main task of the successor in the temporal, political leadership of the state is to enforce the religious law. The successor in the spiritual leadership, on the other hand, earns his position by virtue of his knowledge of the esoteric meaning of the revealed book.<sup>91</sup> From an allegorical story they relate in another place, one can infer that these two successors should rule jointly with the latter having the upper hand.<sup>92</sup> Thus, once again the prominence and indispensability of philosophical representation in the leadership of the state are affirmed.

A third solution calls for a collective leadership which represents an aggregation of the forty-six qualities of the lawgiver. In one place their language suggests that this collective leadership is represented by a group of close supporters and followers of the lawgiver. This group, the Brethren maintain, should base their relationship on mutual support and cooperation and should rule as one person. If they are succeeded by a group of their offspring and students who follow their example in ruling, the community will continue to survive and revive. On the other hand, if the successors to the lawgiver, who collectively

inherit his qualities, fight among themselves, each trying to impose his personal opinions and, hence, originate his own doctrine, their religion will begin to deteriorate and their state will consequently begin to decline.<sup>93</sup> Elsewhere, however, the Brethren seem to be saying that the collective rule that follows the leadership of the lawgiver resides in the community (al-ummah) as a whole. The whole community, they write, is likely to inherit the qualifications of the lawgiver. The individuals of this community must hold on to one opinion, love each other and cooperate with one another in preserving the religious law, in implementing the tradition and example of the lawgiver and in prompting each other along the path of religion. If in doing this they succeed collectively, their existence as a state will continue. If instead the community is torn by disagreements in religious matters, their unity will dissolve and their state will eventually perish.<sup>94</sup>

This last statement suggests that the Brethren believe that the continuity of the state after its founder, the lawgiver, depends, not so much on the existence of qualified leadership as on the religious unity and moral integrity of the community as a whole. Indeed, one scholar, Netton, concludes from this that the Brethren believe that a community which possesses the sum total of the qualifications of the lawgiver can dispense with the leader and still achieve salvation.<sup>95</sup> It is true that the dispensability of the leader is at times acknowledged in the Epistles. But this acknowledgement is not absolute but rather qualified. One can see why Netton is driven to his conclusion where, in fact, he identifies the notion of brotherhood, as idealized in the concept of the Brethren's society (jamā'ah), with that of community (ummah),<sup>96</sup> which normally carries with it a

political connotation.

But here, one has to take into account the realism of the Brethren. It is true that at one place they announce that their own group is ruled by reason which acts as the leader and the arbiter of their society.<sup>97</sup> But elsewhere they explicitly maintain that the community that can dispense with a leader is that which consists of wise, rational men who, in addition to their wisdom and knowledge of the inner meaning of the revealed book, willingly follow the regulations of the religious law.<sup>98</sup> But, despite the Brethren's educational message and despite their efforts in spreading knowledge among those worthy of receiving it, their Epistles imply that this society of wise, rational men will never be identical with the whole ummah. Hence, it must survive within a larger political community where the existence of the political leader is imperative.

The need for the political leader is, thus, acknowledged because the majority of mankind is either intellectually incapable of making reason the leader that rules them, or they do not abide willingly by the religious law. In other words, the leader is needed to command, forbid, restrain and govern the majority and, hence, to hold the state together and to secure its existence.<sup>99</sup> One can, thus, see why the Brethren maintain that even an unjust ruler is better than no ruler at all.<sup>100</sup>

Ideally speaking, the leader of the state must possess certain qualities. These are listed in different parts of the Epistles. They include the disposition of being merciful to the subjects, kind to soldiers and supporters, self-denial, genuine concern for the welfare of the community.<sup>101</sup> They also include personal

qualities of leadership such as: high-spirit, high-mindedness, forcefulness and the lack of inhibition to assert order.<sup>102</sup> Other qualities include quick-wittedness, high culture, generosity, justice, sternness, patience and discernment.<sup>103</sup> A leader that enjoys these qualities is virtuous and politically able.<sup>104</sup> His subjects will live happily under his leadership. An unjust ruler, on the other hand, will oppress his people. Nevertheless, because man is a political animal who needs communal life in order to achieve his perfection, even an unjust ruler is needed for the state to exist. They themselves, as an intellectual society, cannot escape living under this unjust rulership.<sup>105</sup>

In the light of the previous exposition of the Brethren's views concerning leadership, one can conclude that, for them, in order for the community to survive as a political regime, it needs a political leader who enforces the law. The need for political leadership disappears only in a community of wise, good men. But in no place do the Brethren maintain that society will ever attain that degree of perfection whereby political leadership is dispensed with. On the contrary, according to their cyclical theory, they await the seventh leader who, as we shall see, is mainly a political leader, who will initiate the seventh cycle, the last before the end of the world. During this cycle, the leadership will be in the hands of the last leader, and according to some passages, two or three of his followers,<sup>106</sup> which suggests that there will be leadership.<sup>107</sup> From an intellectual point of view, however, the wise, whether they live under a just or unjust political leadership, always make reason the leader of their intellectual groups. The Brethren expect the same intellectual virtuousness from the masses.

Hence, although they acknowledge the importance of the virtuous political leader as an aid to salvation for the masses, they insist that, if the worthy leader is lacking, everyone has to try to acquire the means of salvation for himself. He must control his passions and make his reason the leader of his soul.<sup>108</sup> He must try to reach the Brethren and seek their advice on how to acquire moral integrity and intellectual perfection.<sup>109</sup> Politically speaking, however, all members of the community must accept and obey the political leadership of their community. There is no evidence in the Epistles to suggest that this intellectual rejection of the unworthy leader would lead to an attempt to overthrow him. This brings us to another aspect of the Brethren's political thinking, which is perhaps also an expression of their realism, namely that of obedience to the ruler, even an unjust one.

#### VI Political Obedience and the Role of the Individual in a Corrupt Regime

The Brethren's ideas concerning the issue of political obedience are quite interesting. Generally speaking, obedience to the leader is highly praised by them as the foremost virtue of the ruled.<sup>110</sup> Political disobedience is enumerated by the jinn in the epistle about the animals as one of the vices peculiar to human beings.<sup>111</sup> Elsewhere, the Brethren term it as evil, sin and an atrocity.<sup>112</sup> This is because the king is like the head to the body and the subjects are its organs. When each subject performs the function that befits his abilities without aspiring to a rank that does not suit him, the result is a well-organized state that provides for the welfare of each and every citizen.<sup>113</sup> One naturally expects the Brethren

to hold that this obedience is due only to the just, worthy ruler. This, however, is not necessarily the case. The Brethren's pronouncements, taken as a whole, reveal that the same attitude is also recommended towards the unjust ruler. It is true that in one place they proclaim that the unjust ruler is destined to perish. But their language does not suggest that this is brought about by an active measure of disobedience or revolt.<sup>114</sup>

In this connection, it might be remarked that the Brethren are elitists. Moreover, their elitism is reinforced by their doctrine of predestination. Thus, they hold that the stars determine for every man the profession which he can best do.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, they believe that the movement between classes should be kept to the minimum. If a king's son is ill-starred, they explain, he will descend only one step in the social hierarchy. A lucky commoner, according to them, cannot ascend to the rank of kingship. The maximum that he can accomplish by virtue of his lucky star is to ascend from the social rank to which he originally belongs to the one that immediately follows it.<sup>116</sup> They adopt the doctrine that each profession should be confined to a certain class. This is needed, they argue, to protect the profession of political leadership from being aspired to by those unworthy of it, obviously, the commoners.<sup>117</sup>

The Brethren also maintain that the kind of leadership in any regime is determined by the stars.<sup>118</sup> They define "destiny" (qadar) as the astral providence, "ordinance" (qadā') as God's pre-knowledge of providence.<sup>119</sup> People must accept destiny and divine ordinance because these are nothing but God's will. Hence, objection to God's will in installing the non-virtuous in an

authoritative position is, for them, a sin.<sup>120</sup> Seeking knowledge of future political events through astrology should not be promoted by the conviction that man can intervene and change such events. This knowledge is sought only in order to allow people to prepare themselves for these events.<sup>121</sup> Because all the events that are expressed through astral conjunctions are preordained by God, it is only He who can terminate, reverse or prevent any event from taking place. All that people can do, in fact all that they are religiously allowed to do, is to pray to God to stop, reverse or lighten the sufferings caused by certain events.<sup>122</sup>

This deep belief in the doctrine of predestination, added to their theory of the inevitability of political changes, greatly shaped their pacifist views as far as revolutionary disobedience against unjust leadership is concerned. This pacifist attitude, however, does not mean that their position in a stagnating society which lacks the able leadership is a negative one. It is the main task of the state to provide its citizens with the suitable milieu to acquire the moral and intellectual perfection needed for salvation. The failure of the system to fulfill this function, puts the burden on the citizens themselves. Thus, the Brethren believe that the individuals who do not live under worthy leadership should try to make their reason guide their souls. In this fight for salvation they should seek the help of the knowledgeable. Put in other words, man has the duty to try to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, knowledgeable men have the duty to share their knowledge with others. Thus, in a politically deteriorating regime, man's responsibility is not to get involved in political riots and uprisings aimed at toppling the leadership. His main duty is to acquire knowledge and to help



others do this.

It has to be noted here, however, that the Brethren's elitist/determinist attitude is also adopted in connection with the subject of acquiring knowledge. They, thus, proclaim that the kind of knowledge that fits the elite cannot fit the masses, because of their different intellectual capacities.<sup>123</sup> Although they insist that the acquisition of non-symbolic knowledge of the divine and of the true nature of things is the only way for salvation, they hold that the masses can only attain a representation of this truth. Moreover, they stress the importance of original disposition (jiblah or jibillah) as a major determinant of human capacity to acquire knowledge.<sup>124</sup> They also maintain that there are nations that are naturally disposed to the love of learning and others that are not.<sup>125</sup> In another place, they hold that this love of knowledge is determined by the ordinances of the stars.<sup>126</sup> Although the Brethren made it incumbent upon all individuals to try and acquire true knowledge, they never state that these attempts will always end in success. On the contrary, the tenor of their arguments points to the opposite. This does not stop them, however, from preaching the acquisition of knowledge as the main measure people should pursue in a politically decaying regime. Thus, in an attempt to spur people to engage in the process of learning, they announce that reward and punishment are not determined by the actual acquisition of knowledge. They are rather determined on the basis of the attempts undertaken to acquire it. People, they state, are not punished if their intellectual capacities fail them in the learning process.<sup>127</sup>

## VII The Brethren's Response to the Bankruptcy of the Islamic State of Their Period: the Solution

If we move now from the theoretical level to examine the actual social and political structure within which the Brethren lived, it becomes apparent that their thought was greatly influenced by it. There is constant reference in the Epistles to wide-spread sectarianism. This sectarianism left a great impact on their thought. According to their cyclical scheme, this partisanism denotes the irreversible decay of the religious law.<sup>128</sup> In a political regime where false opinions nourished by ignorant dialecticians (ahl al-jadal) prevail, people of true knowledge are forced to hide their knowledge in order to guard the gift of God, i.e. wisdom, against those alien to it.<sup>129</sup> Ignorance thus accumulates and the result is a state of evil people (dawlat ahl al-sharr).<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the Brethren maintain that the ultimate aim of the political system should be to help the individuals exist in the best state that is possible and achieve the most perfect goals.<sup>131</sup> But it is obvious from their Epistles that the state to which they belonged does not fit this description. Denunciation of political injustices, administrative deterioration, social immorality and economic stagnation abound in their text.<sup>132</sup>

The picture painted by the Brethren of their period is one of devastating deterioration of religious, as well as worldly life. But the Brethren maintain that because God is the cause that necessitated the existence of religion and of worldly life, He will not permit their deterioration.<sup>133</sup> When a certain religion decays from within and with it the state built on its rules and regulations, God resumes the power in a new religion and state.<sup>134</sup> The evil state prevailing in their times,

they write, reached its peak, and according to this theory of stages and cycles, it ought to start declining.<sup>135</sup> But, as mentioned earlier, unlike the case with previous religious laws, the reformation of religion and worldly life in this cycle dominated by the Islamic law will not take the form of new religion revealed to a prophet. The seventh and last cycle in this world of generation and corruption will begin with a seventh leader whose appearance, according to the Brethren, is imminent.<sup>136</sup> The Brethren preached that this seventh leader will be sent with the knowledge that encompasses the sciences of the six previous leaders. They argue that the message of this last leader exists potentially in the religions of the previous prophets and that with him it will move from potentiality to actuality.<sup>137</sup> They write that it will be the task of this seventh leader to breathe the spirit of life in wisdom, to spread true knowledge and to remind the souls of their real abode.<sup>138</sup> By virtue of this, the wise men will be able to reveal the knowledge they possess but which, for fear of the mobs and the dialecticians, they have been hiding.<sup>139</sup> Hence, the state of good people where true knowledge and moral virtues prevail will be established.<sup>140</sup> It is in this sense that this leader is described by them as the chief of the Brethren of Purity (Sayid Ikhwān al-Safāʾ).<sup>141</sup> This is because his appearance and establishment of the state of good people will set free from the chains of silence the people of moral virtues, pure religion and true knowledge, that is, the Brethren.<sup>142</sup>

The seventh leader will be an able politician. Whereas the initiators of the previous six cycles were portrayed by the Brethren mainly as prophets-lawgivers, their language suggests that the seventh leader will be a politician

first and foremost.<sup>143</sup> Although they describe him as the last reminder and the seal of warners,<sup>144</sup> and although they hold that he will be well-versed in the religious law and its inner meaning,<sup>145</sup> they insist that he is not a prophet.<sup>146</sup> Since the religion of God, according to them, was completed with Muhammad, the seventh leader will not be establishing a new religious law. It is true that the Brethren do refer to the seventh leader as "sāhib al-qiyyāmah", that is, the individual by whose arrival the greater resurrection will take place.<sup>147</sup> However, many a passage in their Epistles suggests that the great resurrection will not occur immediately on the arrival of this leader. A considerable period of time will pass during which true knowledge will be disseminated, and a state of good people will be established and ably governed by this leader and his successors.<sup>148</sup>

Nevertheless, the appearance of the seventh leader and the establishment of the state of good people marks, for the Brethren, the beginning of the end of the corporeal world. In other words, the seventh cycle is viewed by them as the final circle in the chain of cosmic rationality whose final intention is the realization of the utmost possible perfection in this period of concealment and, hence, will bring about its termination. It is this concern, which is related to their cosmology and psychology, that made them eagerly await the appearance of the seventh leader and the establishment of the state of the good people. While waiting for the "inevitable" appearance of the seventh leader and in preparation for his arrival, the Brethren tried to teach the true knowledge he would be preaching to as many as possible of the people whose intellectual capabilities permitted them to understand it. Thus, they formed a spiritual virtuous

city of knowledge and they started recruiting people to join it.

Some authors maintain that this spiritual city, or the society of the Brethren of Purity, was a political organization working in preparation for an upcoming political assault against the existing political regime.<sup>149</sup> But, as we have endeavoured to show by giving an overall analysis of the whole of the Brethren's philosophy, these authors' conclusions are not accurate. The Brethren themselves write that their main interest is not this transient world or any of its posts or positions. It is the life to come that concerns them. Interest in both worlds, the Brethren stress, is impossible.<sup>150</sup> It is true that the Islamic state that existed in the fourth/tenth century did not represent, according to their scheme, the worthy regime that can provide for the intellectual and moral perfection of its citizens. It was no longer the state of good people. The solution to this situation, however, as viewed by them, is not to add to the doctrinal strife already tearing the state apart and to the ignorance of its people. Nor is it to organize any political movement to overthrow the political regime. This regime is destined to perish according to divine providence and astral conjunctions. In fact, its fall is quite imminent. Taking this into consideration, the Brethren decided that what they ought to do is to detach themselves from the social and religious strife,<sup>151</sup> to avoid any involvement in political or administrative positions<sup>152</sup> and to totally devote themselves to the acquisition of true knowledge. In other words, their solution is to form for themselves a city that meets the conditions which ought to govern the wise, good men; a city where their own moral rules prevail and where reason acts as their guide and leader.

This city is not a political organization. It is a spiritual city of knowledge whose borders are the ignorance of people.<sup>153</sup> The Brethren write that their city is to be found neither on the earth, nor in the sea, nor in the air.<sup>154</sup> Although this shows that this city is spiritual, that is, it does not exist as a political institution, this does not mean, as Enayat believes, that this city is a kind of utopia to which the Brethren aspire.<sup>155</sup> The Brethren explicitly state that this city already exists.<sup>156</sup> It is composed of good, virtuous people who possess true knowledge of the intellect, the soul, its origin, its role and its destiny, nature, matter and all that follows from these.<sup>157</sup> Their relationship is based on sincerity, purity, truthfulness, moral virtues and fear of God. They are well-versed in the revealed book.<sup>158</sup> The ultimate aim of this city is for each of its members to acquire knowledge of the true meaning of salvation and of eternal bliss.<sup>159</sup> The virtuous people who constitute this spiritual city are organized, according to their intellectual level, into four hierarchical ranks. These ranks, it has to be stressed, are, primarily, intellectual and correspond to the four hierarchical kinds of knowledge that should be gradually attained by the members of this city, namely: knowledge of matter, nature, soul and intellect.<sup>160</sup>

The disputes among the dialecticians of their time, the Brethren explain, lead to further blurring of the true meaning of religion and widened the gap between it and true knowledge. The masses, believing that the truth is with the men of religion, followed them and avoided the true men of knowledge. Consequently, ignorance increased.<sup>161</sup> The measure taken by the Brethren against this prevalence of ignorance, which for them is the main feature of the state of evil people,

is to waken people from the sleep of ignorance by gradually introducing them to true knowledge. It is thus that their system of recruiting people from every social group to their intellectual cause began. For those who cannot attend the meetings of the main group of Brethren, they wrote the Epistles so that they can study it and learn the kind of knowledge the Brethren are teaching.<sup>162</sup> Another common charge often directed to the Brethren is the allegation that their meetings were politically motivated, where discussion of the political situation was conducted; hence, the claim that, because of their political aspirations, they infiltrated every sector of society, not excluding the artisans utilizing a sophisticated system of propaganda.<sup>163</sup> This claim, however, has little to support it.

The Epistles are the written version of the oral lectures given in the Brethren's meetings. The Epistles bear evidence that the concern of these meetings was not political in the sense of forming a revolutionary movement to overthrow the regime. The Brethren were simply attempting to abolish the main feature of the state of evil people, namely, ignorance, by introducing people to true knowledge. Moreover, the propagandists working on behalf of the Brethren were not recruiting people to a political organization but rather to an intellectual movement. We have to remember here what has been mentioned earlier concerning the elitist attitude of the Brethren in connection with the acquisition of knowledge. Although the Brethren sought popular support, they did not recruit people haphazardly. On the contrary, despite their claim that they have followers in every sector of the society,<sup>164</sup> it is quite apparent that they were only

recruiting the seekers of knowledge in each of these sectors. The ignorant people, who do not have a place in their city, are identified, by them, with the common people (al-ʿāmmah).<sup>165</sup> If they were recruiting people to a political, not an intellectual, cause, they would have resorted to whoever could be recruited regardless of intellectual abilities. It is true that they were particularly interested in the young. But this is again justified by them on intellectual and moral, not political, grounds. The young, they hold, accept learning more readily than the old because, unlike the latter who are usually blindly attached to their sectarian beliefs and, hence, are prejudiced, the young are "pure in heart".<sup>166</sup> But this, it should be noted, does not mean that they excluded the old completely .

In the light of this, the claim of some scholars that the Brethren tried to popularize their cause through the Epistles,<sup>167</sup> should be qualified. Although the Brethren held that their teachings were directed to all people, they maintained that not everyone is readily endowed with the intellectual capabilities necessary for grasping the kind of knowledge they were preaching. It follows that some preparation among those who show promising intellectual abilities is necessary. Hence, they advised the brother studying the Epistles to discuss them in secret meetings. They warned him against introducing to the kind of knowledge contained in them, people who are morally or intellectually unprepared for it.<sup>168</sup> In other words, their teachings are directed to "all" the people who are intellectually capable of grasping them. This further proves that the message of the Epistles was not political or they would have tried to ensure that it reach everyone.



Enayat is correct in holding that possession of knowledge is considered by the Brethren as a means of determining one's own life. His claim, however, that knowledge is understood by the Brethren as an effort to accelerate or initiate the existence of political change is questionable.<sup>169</sup> The inevitability of the coming of the seventh leader, the initiator of the seventh and the last cycle in the world of generation and corruption, is not doubted by them. The timing of this event is also predetermined and no human effort can accelerate or slow it down. Hence, the city which the Brethren formed is an intellectual society meant by them to be a "ship of salvation". While waiting for the appearance of the seventh leader, the Brethren were determined that they, along with all those who can be intellectually recruited to their cause, not drown in the sea of matter, that is, this worldly life. Their spiritual city of knowledge is the ship that will help them cross this sea safely and arrive at the shore of eternal life.<sup>170</sup> Contrary to what Enayat holds, this spiritual city is not the state of good people.<sup>171</sup> The state of good people is a political structure that will be established by the seventh leader when God wills his cycle to start. The Brethren's spiritual city of knowledge is nothing more than a simulation of this state of good people at a time when this state is not yet in existence.

One final question has to be answered. Does the state of good people that will eventually be established by the seventh leader represent the virtuous regime in the Brethren's scheme? To answer this question one should reflect on whether or not the religious states as established by the six previous prophets-lawgivers are considered by them to be virtuous regimes. This is because the seventh cycle

is, in their scheme, a resumption of God's message to the earth which also existed in the previous six cycles.

In the light of the Brethren's ideas concerning the origin of and reason for the coming into existence of the world of generation and corruption, one cannot but conclude that these religious states, as established by the six leading prophets, are not considered by the Brethren as "the" ideal regimes. Actually, it is a contradiction in term, as one reads them, to describe any worldly government as an absolutely virtuous regime. Mankind, for them, is the outcome of a sin. This earthly existence is a period of trial and punishment for all humanity. Whatever is accomplished during this period and in the human corporeal form cannot hence be termed as ideal in an absolute sense. No where do they qualify either the state which is established by a prophet-lawgiver or the regimes that followed his example after him as being "virtuous".

The virtuousness of any worldly regime is proportional to the degree in which it is efficient in helping people free themselves from the prison of this material world. The state of good people, as will be established by the seventh leader, might rightly be considered as the highest in this scale of proportional virtuousness. This is because it is the final stage in the progress of humanity towards perfection. But this perfection, it has to be remembered, is still tarnished by the shortcomings of the corporeal. The absolute perfection and, hence, the only true ideal, according to the Brethren's scheme, is spiritual. Their ideal is a proper Utopia. It is the state of the complete annihilation of everything save God and the Active Intellect. This "state", it is evident, is not a state in any

political sense.

The Brethren discuss the worldly states led by the prophets and their worthy successors not as ideal utopian states but rather as practical schemes. The consecutive religious states established by lawgivers are simply considered by the Brethren as means and gradual steps towards the realization of their true ideal; an ideal which is not political, because it does not belong to this material world. This, in all probability, is the reason why they included their discussions of the functions of the lawgiver in the epistle dealing with "Practical Professions".<sup>172</sup> Prophecy, lawgiving and establishing a good religious state are, hence, practical steps driving sinful humanity closer to the only true state of absolute virtue, the return to God and the perishing of the world of generation and corruption with all its political regimes. The existence of political regimes is evidence that true virtue has not yet been attained. Once it is attained, the practical reason for the existence of these regimes will end.

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The Brethren's main interest was not worldly political power. They were concerned with what man ought to do in order to rescue himself from the material world, particularly at a time when the surrounding corrupt milieu hampered his efforts to gain salvation for his soul. The pursuit of knowledge, which brings in its train every moral virtue, is declared, by them, to be the solution for the plight of man. The pursuit and propagation of knowledge constitutes, for them, the worthiest purpose anyone can follow. Education on a grand intellectual and

ethical scale is understood, by them, to be the "political action" which ought to be undertaken in a corrupt, ignorant society.

The whole point of the Epistles is epistemological. The Brethren's call to self-purification by means of acquiring intellectual and moral virtues is usually misinterpreted as political. Thus, their desire for true knowledge and moral values in a time of profound ignorance and moral bankruptcy, and hence their emphasis on the importance of seeking the wise teacher, is twisted to appear as an invitation to a political leader, an imam. Their aspiration for the ideal utopia of the world of spirits is misunderstood as an instigation to a *Shi'ī* (usually *Ismā'īlī*) seizure of power.

The Brethren's concern was not this worldly life but the life to come. Their ultimate purpose was not political but spiritual and supraphysical, and their approach towards fulfilling this transcendent dream was epistemological through and through.

ENDNOTES

1. RIS, 1:99-100; 2:139-40; 3:308.
2. RIS, 1:306; 3:475.
3. Ibid.
4. RIS, 3:425-26.
5. RIS, 1:306; 3:404-05, 425-26.
6. RIS, 1:261; 4:169.
7. RIS, 4:251.
8. RIS, 1:317-18.
9. RIS, 4:169.
10. RIS, 1:100; 2:140; 3:404; 4:169.
11. RIS, 3:375.
12. RIS, 2:139-40.
13. RIS, 3:308.
14. RJ, 2:322-26; 531.
15. RIS, 3:267. The Brethren define conjunction (qirān) as the meeting of at least two planets in the same degree of one of the signs of the zodiac. See RIS, 1:136.
16. Examine RIS, 1:154-55, 180; 2:214, 467-68; 3:266; 4:189.
17. RIS, 1:180-81; 4:186-87.
18. RIS, 1:154; 3:266.
19. David and Solomon are two examples of this case. See RIS, 3:496.
20. RIS, 3:497.

21. RIS, 2:368; 3:29.
22. RIS, 2:368.
23. RIS, 2:299, 368; 3:495.
24. RIS, 2:235, 368; 3:29, 495.
25. RIS, 2:368.
26. RIS, 3:495.
27. RIS, 3:495-96.
28. RIS, 4:83-84.
29. Ibid.
30. RIS, 3:497.
31. RIS, 3:489; 4:125.
32. RIS, 4:129-30.
33. See pp. 135-36 above.
34. RIS, 4:130-32.
35. RIS, 4:132.
36. RIS, 4:136.
37. RIS, 4:132-33.
38. Enayat, "Outline," pp. 41-42.
39. RIS, 3:495-96; 4:128.
40. RIS, 4:133. Examine RIS, 2:241, where he makes this one of the tasks of kingship.
41. RIS, 2:240-41; 3:428; RJ, 1:157.
42. RIS, 4:135.
43. RIS, 4:134.

44. RIS, 3:495.
45. RIS, 4:135.
46. RIS, 4:134.
47. Examine RIS, 3:484-85.
48. RIS, 1:363; 2:206-07; 3:246; 4:30-31, 42, 166.
49. See Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, pp. 55ff.
50. RIS, 4:31.
51. RIS, 1:143-44; 2:280.
52. RIS, 1:267, 323.
53. RIS, 4:245.
54. RIS, 2:307.
55. RIS, 2:283-86.
56. RIS, 4:121-22.
57. RIS, 4:161.
58. RIS, 3:458.
59. RIS, 3:404-05, 484-85.
60. RIS, 3:486-87.
61. RIS, 1:310, 3:484, 501.
62. RIS, 3:501.
63. RIS, 3:312-13.
64. RIS, 4:44.
65. RIS, 3:313, 501.
66. RIS, 4:44.

57. RJ, 2:423.
68. RIS, 4:134-35.
69. RIS, 1:326.
70. RIS, 1:366.
71. RIS, 3:162-63; 4:460.
72. RIS, 3:162-63.
73. RIS, 2:368.
74. RIS, 3:264ff.; RJ, 2:404-13, 519, 525ff.
75. RJ, 2:447, 463; 3:143.
76. RIS, 3:377; 4:195.
77. RJ, 1:245.
78. RIS, 3:143.
79. RIS, 2:141; RJ, 2:500-01, 519, 4:122, 161-62.
80. RIS, 3:486-88.
81. RIS, 3:501.
82. RIS, 2:300; 3:484. Differences among nations are stressed in the fourth epistle devoted to geography where diversities in climate are held responsible for differences between nations in language, complexion, disposition, character, beliefs and crafts. It is also emphasized in the epistle devoted to the linguistic differences between nations and also in the epistle devoted to climates where this is mentioned as one of the reasons for religious differences.
83. RIS, 2:298-300.
84. Elsewhere, they state that a universal state comes into existence only when one religion dominates the whole world. See RJ, 2:396, 397, 398. Reviewing their views concerning the inevitability of religious differences, one can



conclude that this state will not materialize. An exception to this is when the state of the good people as founded by the seventh leader will be established. See pp. 490-94 below.

85. RIS, 4:125.
86. RJ, 2:477.
87. See p. 378 above.
88. RIS, 3:489.
89. RIS, 1:321.
90. RIS, 2:299
91. RIS, 1:327.
92. RIS, 4:315ff., especially, p. 326.
93. RIS, 3:489-90.
94. RIS, 4:125.
95. Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists, pp. 102-04.
96. Ibid., p. 103.
97. RIS, 4:127.
98. RIS, 4:137-38.
99. RIS, 4:127, 137.
100. RIS, 3:303.
101. RIS, 2:241, 340.
102. RIS, 2:437.
103. RIS, 2:240-41.
104. RIS, 2:340.

105. RIS, 3:308.
106. RJ, 2:398-400.
107. This cycle will go on for some time. Some passages suggest that, although the seventh leader is sāhib al-qiyyamah, the great resurrection will not occur immediately after his appearance. See, for example, RJ, 2:399-400, 464-66. Hence, one could argue that part of this cycle might be leaderless; if so, this will be for a very short time, after which the greater resurrection will take place.
108. RIS, 4:380.
109. Ibid.
110. RIS, 3:428-29; 454.
111. RIS, 2:223.
112. RIS, 1:354.
113. RIS, 2:24. See also, 1:353-54.
114. RIS, 3:172.
115. RIS, 1:290.
116. RIS, 1:149.
117. RIS, 1:292.
118. RIS, 1:180.
119. RIS, 4:73.
120. RIS, 3:529.
121. RIS, 1:156.
122. RIS, 2:353-54. See also, 1:186.
123. RIS, 3:511.

124. RJ, 1:37-38. See RIS, 1:303, where they write that differences in disposition result from the astral conjunctions.
125. RIS, 3:277.
126. RJ, 1:37-38; 3:533.
127. RJ, 1:40, 44-45.
128. RIS, 3:153-54; RJ, 2:324-25.
129. RIS, 3:154; 4:166.
130. RIS, 3:153-55; 4:171; RJ, 2:324ff. Note that they write that one of the signs pointing to the imminent coming of the seventh leader is the disappearance of wisdom. See RJ, 2:442.
131. RIS, 1:314.
132. See pp. 23-24 above.
133. RIS, 1:292.
134. See RIS, 3:152-55; RJ, 2:324-26, 398.
135. RIS, 1:181; 4:187.
136. See RIS, 4:190.
137. RJ, 1:285-85; 2:409, 463.
138. RJ, 1:85-87; 2:464.
139. RJ, 1:199-203.
140. RJ, 1:87-88.
141. RJ, 1:286.
142. RJ, 1:199-203, 285-86.
143. RJ, 2:306-08.
144. RJ, 1:148.

145. RJ, 2:306-03, 477, 523.
146. RJ, 2:467.
147. RJ, 1:286; 2:308.
148. RJ, 2:399-400, 464-66.
149. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, p. 104ff.; Enayat, "Outline," pp. 25-26; De Boer, History, pp. 81-83. This is also the assumption of A. Hamdani in his works used in this thesis.
150. See, for example, RIS, 4:169, 325; RJ, 2:507-08.
151. RIS, 3:155-56, 168-69.
152. RIS, 4:166, 254.
153. RIS, 4:173.
154. RJ, 2:527; RIS, 4:172.
155. Enayat, "Outline," pp. 43-44.
156. RIS, 4:173.
157. RIS, 4:171; RJ, 2:528.
158. RIS, 4:171, 172; RJ, 2:527-28.
159. RIS, 4:171.
160. RIS, 4:172, 173-75; RJ, 2:528-29.
161. RIS, 3:154-55; RJ, 2:324.
162. RIS, 4:173.
163. Hijāb, al-Falsafah, pp. 142ff.; Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," p. 73.
164. RIS, 4:165.
165. RIS, 3:511, 515, where the 'āmmah are identified with the youths, the women and the ignorant.

- 166. RIS, 4:51-52.
- 167. Hamdani, "Fāṭimid Source," pp. 73-74.
- 168. RIS, 4:173; RJ, 1:66, 79.
- 169. Enayat, "Outline," pp. 28, 32.
- 170. RIS, 4:172; RJ, 2:528.
- 171. Enayat, "Outline," p. 44.
- 172. See RIS, 1:273-74.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

As our exposition of the thought of al-Fārābī and the Brethren reveals, there are similarities in their philosophies that, at times, seem to be quite striking. This is not surprising for, as we have indicated, the Brethren were eclectic and their works came after those of al-Fārābī. There is concrete evidence that they incorporated into their system some of al-Fārābī's ideas. This, however, does not mean that the similarities are abundant or that they touch the roots of their respective outlooks. On the contrary, as we hope to show, the two systems of thought are very divergent, representing quite different genres of thinking, one basically philosophical, the other essentially religious. This last point requires clarification.

Our argument that the difference between al-Fārābī and the Brethren is that between a philosophical and a religious outlook is best brought home when one considers the starting points of these two systems. With al-Fārābī, the starting point is not revelation. Revelation is interpreted within his philosophical system. Prophetic knowledge is really philosophical knowledge expressed in the language which the masses can understand. Thus, for example, God is considered by him the creator in the sense that He is the one from whom the world emanates eternally and who is the ground of all existence. Creation does not mean creation ex-nihilo and does not mean the temporal finitude of the universe. The scriptural language, taken at its face value that indicates such finitude, is to be interpreted philosophically by those capable of such interpretation. With the Brethren, although they can be quite philosophical and

although their final interpretations of the end of the world may not withstand the criticism of the traditional Muslim, nonetheless, their starting point is the revealed word, the Qur'an. What is stated in it is considered by them to be unquestionable facts. Philosophical interpretation of the scripture is confined to the nature of these facts. This, thus, colours their entire approach. The spirit of their thought remains essentially religious. Thus, when it comes to politics, which is our main concern, with al-Fārābī we have a genuine political philosophy, sophisticated and highly developed. With the Brethren, on the other hand, what we have are political ideas that are part of an eschatology.

Throughout our analysis, we have indicated how the political ideas of both al-Fārābī and the Brethren have to be understood within their respective cosmological and psychological viewpoints. For this reason, in our comparisons, we will begin with their cosmologies and their respective doctrines of the human soul associated with them, including epistemology and theory of prophecy, and then turn our attention to their political ideas.<sup>1</sup>

### I Metaphysics and Cosmology

In comparing and contrasting the cosmology of al-Fārābī and the Brethren, one must begin with their respective concepts of God. Here, more than anywhere else, there is considerable agreement. Both al-Fārābī and the Brethren consider God to be perfect, uncaused, eternal, immaterial and self-sufficient. More important is that they both agree that what sets God apart from other entities is the unity of His essence. Both hold that unity, as well as other attributes such as

life and wisdom, are not superadded to His essence, but are constituents of this very essence.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, although al-Fārābī maintains that nothing is like God and that He is not susceptible to being defined,<sup>3</sup> he conceives Him mainly as an intellect. God, for al-Fārābī, is pure intellect who is capable of knowing Himself. He is thought thinking itself and, hence, is intellect and intelligible.<sup>4</sup> The Brethren, on the other hand, in their insistence on the otherness of God, refrain completely from any such reference. Thus, when explaining God's essence, they resort to listing what God does instead of expressing their views of what God is.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, they proclaim that one should not ask: What God is (mā huwā). The only field of inquiry that befits His sublimity and otherness, according to them, is: Who He is (man huwā). Who He is, is known through His signs.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Fārābī and the Brethren also differ on the Creator's relation to the world. First of all, despite the fact that al-Fārābī holds that God is an intellect and that He is knowing (ʿālim), his language suggests that God does not know particulars in their particularity.<sup>7</sup> The Brethren, on the other hand, are quite explicit in insisting that God knows all particulars as particulars.<sup>8</sup> They insist on this because of their belief in the non-eternity of the world and in the judgment of the particular souls, each according to its individual deeds.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, it is true that both al-Fārābī and the Brethren consider God to be the First cause of all existents, not simply in the sense that He is the Prime Mover, but mainly in the sense that all existents proceed from Him. It is also true that, in explaining the relation of God to the existents, they both endorse a theory of emanation. Al-Fārābī's emanative theory, however, is quite



distinct from the Brethren's, not only regarding the concept of divine agency and the eternity of the emanative process it implies, but also regarding the chain of emanation itself, that is, the ordering of this chain and the type of beings it includes. Thus, for al-Fārābī, the world emanates as the necessary consequence of God's eternal act and is hence necessary and eternal. Needless to say, from an Islamic point of view, these two doctrines are quite unorthodox since, in effect, they deny the divine attribute of will. For, although al-Fārābī holds that the emanation of the universe is due to the superabundance of God's perfection and that this universe adds nothing to His perfection, he, nonetheless, argues that God generates the world by a necessity of His nature independently of any choice or desire, and that this action is as eternal as God is.<sup>10</sup>

The Brethren, on the other hand, reject both ideas. God, according to them, is not necessitated in His acts by anything. He creates the world because He wills it to be after it was not. Moreover, they argue that at a finite moment in the past, God allowed the universal soul to unite with the absolute body of the universe (hence for the world to be created) so that the universal soul can perfect itself. For the same reason, they continue, particular souls unite with particular bodies. Thus, they reason, when this aim is fulfilled at a finite moment in the future, that is, when all or most of the particular souls which, in their totality, constitute the universal soul, acquire perfection by actualizing themselves, the world itself will cease to exist.<sup>11</sup>

To turn to the differences between al-Fārābī and the Brethren concerning the chain of emanation, we note that al-Fārābī's emanative chain is dyadic. From

God overflows the first intelligence and from the latter another intelligence and a body emanate. This dyadic emanative process is repeated, resulting in ten intelligences, the last of which is the active intellect, and nine celestial spheres, the last of which is the sphere of the moon.

With the Brethren, emanation takes a somewhat different course. From God, the universal intellect, to which they also refer as the active intellect, emanates. From the intellect, the universal soul emanates and from the latter prime matter streams forth. With the appearance of prime matter and its acquisition of length, breadth and depth, by virtue of which it develops into the second matter, or the absolute body, the emanative process, according to them, ends. For them, the spherical celestial bodies of the universe which start with the outermost sphere originate not by emanation, as in al-Fārābī's cosmology, but when the universal soul, which yearns to bestow on another being the virtues and goods it receives from the active intellect, unites with the absolute body of the universe. Moreover, to the nine celestial spheres that constitute the spherical body of the universe in al-Fārābī's scheme, they add two other spheres, namely, the sphere of the four elements (or the sphere of air) and the sphere of the earth. Thus, while in al-Fārābī's system only God and the first intelligence exist beyond the outermost sphere, with the Brethren, the universal soul and prime matter are also beyond this sphere.

The Brethren term this world beyond the outermost sphere, the world of spirits. It is the realm of universal non-physical beings. They distinguish between it and two other realms, the world of spheres and the world of generation and

corruption. The world of spheres consists of all the astral spheres. Like the beings of the first realm, the beings in this world of spheres are considered by the Brethren to be universal. What differentiates them, however, is that, unlike the supra-physical beings of the realm of spirits, they are related to bodies. Thus, the world of spheres is considered by them as a corporeal world. The last of the three realms that together constitute the whole world, the world of generation and corruption, is corporeal also. However, it is the only world in which particular animal bodies are found. In this world, the lowest level of existence consists of minerals. These are followed by plants and then animals.

Al-Fārābī, on the other hand, divides the world into two realms only. The first is the heavenly realm which consists of the ten intelligences and nine spheres. The second is the terrestrial realm that begins with prime matter and ends, at its highest level, with man.

The Brethren's view regarding the realms into which the world is classified, which differs from al-Fārābī's, is relevant to their distinct cosmological views. Moreover, they differ from al-Fārābī in that they quite explicitly explain this classification in Qur'anic terms. For one thing, they hold that it represents a doctrine of the world's creation in time and that it will be terminated at a finite moment in the future. In relation to this, they maintain that the world of spirits is paradise from which the souls that yearn after matter are driven down to the world of generation and corruption. This they interpret as hell. The good souls that perfect themselves intellectually and morally during their earthly life are rewarded by being elevated to the rank of angels that inhabit

the world of spheres. Although this angelic realm is described by the Brethren as the paradise of the human soul, they still consider the world of spirits to be the true paradise. But this true paradise is nothing but the return to the initial state that prevailed before the creation of the corporeal celestial and terrestrial worlds. In other words, the actual realization of the true paradise, the world of spirits, will not take place until the corporeal world perishes. This, in turn, will occur when most of the particular souls actualize their potentiality. Until this takes place, the world of the spheres acts as a transitional world in which the good perfect souls live for as long as the celestial and terrestrial worlds exist. Hence, the justification for the three realms in the Brethren's scheme.

Because al-Fārābī, on the other hand, believes in the eternity of the world, he only speaks of two realms, the terrestrial and the celestial. The former is the world of the corruptible, the home of the soul while united with a body. The latter is the world of the immortal, the home of the souls that acquire immateriality during their terrestrial life and, hence, live eternally everafter.

The beings that constitute the chain of emanation in al-Fārābī's and the Brethren's schemes also differ drastically. Thus, while the intellect, the first being that emanates from God, is identified by the Brethren with the active intellect, we find that the active intellect, in al-Fārābī's scheme, is the tenth and last celestial intelligence. Moreover, as will be shortly indicated, the universal soul, which is not included in al-Fārābī's emanative process, plays a pivotal role in the entire philosophical scheme of the Brethren, that is, in their cosmology, psychology, political thought and eschatology. Prime matter, on the other hand,

represents for al-Fārābī the lowest level of terrestrial existence, originating as it does for him from the circular movement of the heavenly bodies. In complete contrast to this, prime matter, for the Brethren, is one of the universal spiritual beings that streams forth directly from the universal soul.

By virtue of the circular motion of the spheres, al-Fārābī and the Brethren agree, the beings of the world of generation and corruption originate. But again, their explanations of how this takes place differ. It is here that the Brethren greatly stress the dominance of the universal soul. We have seen that al-Fārābī views the existence of the heavenly bodies as part of the emanative process in terms of which they emanate from the celestial intelligences. These heavenly bodies, in their turn, become responsible, due to their circular motion, for the appearance of prime matter. It is also these heavenly bodies that give the different forms which prime matter acquires. These forms result from the difference in the speed of the celestial bodies. From the interaction between the motions specific to each heavenly body, al-Fārābī writes, the first four elements originate, followed by rocky bodies, plants, animals and, finally, man. Moreover, it is the celestial intelligences that are responsible, according to al-Fārābī, for this movement of the heavenly bodies.<sup>12</sup>

In the Brethren's scheme, it is the universal soul that acts as the prime mover. It causes the astral spheres to rotate around the four elements, resulting, ultimately, in the origination of the composite beings of the three kingdoms. Moreover, according to the Brethren, the universal soul is not only responsible for bringing into being the celestial and terrestrial bodies, but also for providing

these bodies with forms. These forms, they write, emanate from the universal active intellect and are received by the universal soul which, in its turn, endows them on the bodies.<sup>13</sup>

Terrestrial existence is hierarchically ordered for both al-Fārābī and the Brethren. Both also agree that the process of creation in the terrestrial world is reversed, as it begins with the less perfect and ends with the highest perfection of terrestrial existence, that is, man. The Brethren, however, unlike al-Fārābī, do not only stress the hierarchical order of terrestrial beings but also emphasize the temporal factor in the coming into being of the terrestrial composite objects. As we have seen, the Brethren maintain that minerals temporally preceded plants, plants animals, and animals man.

The chronological order is specifically stressed by the Brethren because it is central to their cosmological and psychological doctrines. Thus, to begin with, the particular souls, as mentioned earlier, fall to the centre of the earth as a result of their sin of desiring matter. They are released from the helpless state of potentiality and made to acquire natural organic forms so that they would have the opportunity to repent. A process of evolution follows whereby a member of a certain species is elevated to a higher species. This, however, should not be interpreted in Darwinian terms (as some writers have done).<sup>14</sup> This elevation is viewed by the Brethren, primarily, as a reward commensurate with the success of the being to abide by the rules ordained by God to govern the species to which it belongs. Secondly, the Brethren maintain that every event on the earth is, in the ultimate analysis, performed by God through his agent

(or angel), nature, which is nothing but one of the several powers of the Universal Soul. But the Brethren's whole conception of nature is teleological. The Brethren maintain that God did not create anything in vain. Everything is created to fulfill a certain purpose, the ultimate purpose for which the world exists being the return of all to God. It is in this context that the Brethren consider the appearance of each kingdom in temporal sequence. Each lower kingdom precedes the next higher one because the lower is created to serve the higher, which is a step further towards the realization of the ultimate purpose of creation.<sup>15</sup>

Man is considered by both al-Fārābī and the Brethren as representing the highest stage in the chain of terrestrial beings. But again, it is in the Brethren's scheme that this notion is integrated within the whole of their cosmological and psychological structure. Because the gradation of terrestrial beings from the less perfect to the more perfect is considered by them mainly as a return towards the heavenly perfection, this gradation is necessarily finite. It is man, or rather the perfect man, that forms the final circle in this chain. By virtue of being the only terrestrial being that can attain knowledge of the divine, man is considered by them as the upright terrestrial existant and as representing the straight path (al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm) leading from hell to heaven. All other stages of terrestrial existence are created in order to permit the appearance of the human stage. This human stage, in its turn, allows the fulfillment of the purpose of the whole creation. Thus, it is destined to be the final stage of terrestrial existence and, hence, man has a duty to carry this task entrusted to him.

In order for man to fulfill the purpose from his creation, he must undergo a process of spiritual self-evolution. Because God did not create another species after man, man's evolution is, thus, inward. It is man's duty to evolve his human soul through different hierarchical stages, from the stage of the soul of a child to that of the soul of the wise. This they call the soul of a potential angel. This is because the attainment of this stage means the ability of the soul to return to its origin which, in a sense, is the fulfillment of the final purpose of creation.

Thus, "man" as an individual is central to the Brethren's cosmology. In al-Fārābī's system, on the other hand, it is the relation of the cosmological chain to the whole of the political regime with the supreme ruler at the top that is stressed. Unlike al-Fārābī, the Brethren hardly ever equated the universe with the city. It is rather man who is constantly proclaimed to be parallel to the universe. Thus the stress we find in al-Fārābī's writings on the duty of the virtuous ruler to emulate the harmony of the cosmos when organizing the city is very scarce in the Brethren's Epistles. We find, instead, a proclamation that, while on earth, it is man's duty to acquire true knowledge of the cosmic realities. Thanks to the analogy between the universe and man, the soul, through this knowledge, can come to know its origin, its place and role, and can ultimately free itself from its earthly prison.

In its struggle to attain true knowledge, the human soul, according to the Brethren, is guided by the universal soul. Unlike al-Fārābī, who maintains that it is the active intellect that actualizes the human potential intellect, the



Brethren reserve this role for the universal soul. This brings us to a consideration of their respective psychological doctrines.

## II Psychology, Epistemology and Theory of Prophecy

Not only does the universal soul play the dominant role in bringing about the bodies and forms of the corporeal celestial and terrestrial beings in the Brethren's philosophy, but it also has a direct relation to the particular souls that inhabit these bodies. While in al-Fārābī's writings there is no clear indication of how the particular souls come into existence, the Brethren, on the other hand, maintain that it is the universal soul that acts as the source of the particular souls which emanate or stream forth from it and, as such, are considered to be faculties or powers of this soul. What is still more important is that the Brethren, unlike al-Fārābī, give a detailed account of why and how the particular souls come to unite with the bodies and why they should try to depart with these bodies. In this account, they employ the notion of the three realms, the spiritual, the celestial and the terrestrial, borrowing widely from religious teachings, yet interpreting them allegorically to accord with their beliefs and voicing ideas totally foreign to al-Fārābī.

Thus, they speak of the sin of the soul when losing interest in the intellectual and moral benefits of the universal soul, of the fall of these forgetting souls to unite with matter, of the end of the period of exposure when abstract knowledge is abundant, of the beginning of the period of concealment when knowledge of the absolute is concealed from the particular souls by the coarseness

of the bodies, of the soul's elevation by virtue of its obedience and endurance of bodily pains from the mineral, to the plant, to the animal and finally to the human rank, of the elevation of the human soul that succeeds in regaining access to true knowledge to the angelic rank, of the lesser resurrection, hell and paradise, punishment and reward of the soul after departing with the body, of the greater resurrection and the ultimate destiny of the soul. It is thus obvious that the whole structure of the Brethren's philosophy is explained in terms of their epistemology. Loss of interest in true knowledge results in the termination of the period of exposure and the creation of the corporeal world of generation and corruption. Thus, regaining this knowledge will bring about the end of this world and the return to the original state of supreme happiness and absolute good marked by an utter exposure of the abstract.

It is true that al-Fārābī, like the Brethren, holds that the particular soul at first has knowledge only potentially, and that, in order to gain salvation, it has to be actually knowledgeable. They differ, however, regarding the manner in which the transition from the state of potentiality to that of actuality is affected, and also in the way each of them understands the meaning of the salvation of the soul.

To take first the process of actualization, we find that the primary difference between al-Fārābī and the Brethren is that, while al-Fārābī assigns the main role in this process to the active intellect, the Brethren reserve this role for the universal soul. This difference in emphasis on the intellect, on the part of al-Fārābī, and on the soul, on the part of the Brethren, is observed

throughout their psychological and epistemological schemes.

Thus, al-Fārābī gives a detailed, systematic, epistemological account of the actualization of the human potential intellect through the action of the Active Intellect. The Brethren, on the other hand, simply state that the universal soul (not the active intellect), which possesses knowledge in actuality, is the agent that moves the human soul from potentiality into action. The knowledge that actualizes the human soul, they maintain, overflows as one continuous flow (daf'atan wāhidah) from the universal soul onto the human soul. But while this overflow of knowledge is continuous, its reception by the human soul is not. The elevation of the human soul from potentiality to actuality is gradual.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, al-Fārābī, although he agrees with the Brethren that the process of actualization happens gradually, emphasizes, unlike them, that it is the rational soul, in particular, or the human intellect, as he calls it, that acquires the aptitude to learn. Thus, the stages of gradation in al-Fārābī's scheme pertain to the intellect which, according to him, rises from the stage of potential intellect to that of actualized intellect and finally to the stage of acquired intellect. The gradation in the Brethren's scheme, as we have seen, involves the elevation of the human soul, in general. The rank of rationality is but one stage in this process of elevation towards actuality. It is significant to note in this regard that, although the Brethren, like al-Fārābī, identify the intellect with the rational soul, in their epistemological account they always employ the term "soul" and not intellect, a fact that further shows that they maintain that the aptitude to learn belongs to the soul, in general, and not only to the rational

soul, or intellect, as such.

If we turn now to the meaning of salvation according to al-Fārābī and the Brethren, we find that they both maintain that the actualization of the human soul means that it can dispense with the body. They also agree that, by virtue of this immaterial state, the soul becomes immortal and thus gains salvation. But, unlike al-Fārābī, who finds it sufficient to explain that it is by virtue of the kind of knowledge possessed when the stage of the acquired intellect is reached that the soul attains salvation since immateriality means immortality, the Brethren tie the notion of the soul's actualization, that is, its immateriality and immortality, to the whole of their religiously based cosmology and psychology.

Thus, the elevation of the particular soul from the mineral to the plant, animal and human ranks, respectively, is considered by them as part of the soul's overall rescue from the helpless state of potentiality to that of actuality. This, together with the gradual actualization of the human soul itself, is viewed by them primarily as the particular soul's journey of repentance. The Brethren describe the particular soul that succeeds in actualizing itself mainly as being a potential angel. For them, this actualization means, in the first place, that the soul has succeeded in atoning for the sin it committed and which caused it to lose its spiritual rank and to be united with matter. Efficient manipulation of the bodily chains as faculties that help it transform its weakness and potentiality into strength and actuality calls for a reward. The reward is described by them as elevation to the rank of an actual angel and never again having

to experience the hell of the corporeal in the terrestrial world.

Needless to say, although, in the final analysis, the core of the meaning of salvation could be close to al-Fārābī's, the context in which it is portrayed is drastically different. Moreover, because the Brethren, unlike al-Fārābī, reject the eternity of the world, they view the soul's immortality, as an individual spiritual essence in the celestial spheres, as being also transient. The Brethren, it should be recalled, differentiate between the lesser and greater resurrections. The first takes place after the death of the body to which each particular soul was united. The second takes place after the death of the whole universe. Hence, unlike al-Fārābī who speaks only about the destiny of each soul after it separates from the body, the Brethren speak about this and also about the destiny of all the actualized souls after the perishing of the celestial and terrestrial worlds.

If we take first the destiny of the soul after the occurrence of the lesser resurrection, we find that the Brethren employ here the same criterion for salvation used by al-Fārābī, namely, the achievement of a measure of abstract intellectual knowledge. Thus, both al-Fārābī and the Brethren maintain that the souls that render themselves immaterial while still united with the body survive after the destruction of the body to enjoy happiness. As for the destiny of the souls that fail to acquire knowledge of the true nature of things, the positions of al-Fārābī and the Brethren differ.

The Brethren, who endorse a religiously, epistemologically oriented interpretation of the reason why the world of generation and corruption exists and, hence, of the role of the particular soul in it, stress the individual duty

of each particular soul to accomplish the intellectual and moral aim of its earthly life independently of the circumstances in which it exists. They thus maintain that the intellectually unfulfilled souls that, nevertheless, maintain moral integrity by following the exoteric teachings of the religion, are returned to the human rank, that is to hell. Their proclamation that the souls of the insane and the children are saved by the recommendation of their parents and the prophets does not contradict their overall views. Although such souls do not actualize their potentialities, in the light of the Brethren's religious concerns, these souls do not legally belong to the category of obligated beings and hence cannot be punished.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul which is apparent in the Brethren's discussion of the destiny of the soul is also found in al-Fārābī. However, unlike the Brethren, al-Fārābī's views regarding the destiny of the soul in general are intimately connected with his political philosophy. Thus, the fate of the human soul in the hereafter in al-Fārābī's philosophy depends on the type of regime to which the individual soul in its earthly existence belongs. There is more stress on political circumstances than on individual responsibility. Hence, unlike the Brethren, he proclaims that the morally virtuous souls that live in the virtuous regime will gain salvation solely by abiding by the moral rules revealed to the prophet and which prevail in this regime. Here, we encounter a discrepancy in al-Fārābī's account of salvation. In his psychological discussions he suggests that only the souls that acquire the intelligibles survive. This difficulty is not found in the Brethren. They are quite specific, as we have seen, in maintaining that

only those rational souls that have been actualized are saved. The exception of the insane and the children who die young is justified by them, as we have mentioned, on religious grounds. Whether this absolves them from inconsistency is another matter, but, in general, their position seems to be more consistent than that of al-Fārābī.

At any rate, al-Fārābī's inconsistency appears only with regard to the unactualized souls of the citizens of the virtuous city in particular. Hence, we find him declaring that the souls of the citizens of the ignorant, the erring and the renegade regimes will perish after the death of the body. The reason he gives is in accordance with his original view. Because these souls fail to gain the state of immateriality, they, like all material things, become part of the process of generation and corruption and, hence, can live a second cycle of life. This philosophical justification of the doctrine of transmigration contrasts with the religious discussion offered by the Brethren who viewed the transmigration of the soul mainly as a kind of punishment. Consequently, while al-Fārābī simply states that the form with which such souls unite depends only on what comes out of the combination of the basic elements to which they disintegrate, the Brethren determine the corporeal form to which the soul returns on the basis of the gravity of its ignorance and immorality. As for the citizens of the immoral regimes, as well as the political leaders of both the erring and the renegade regimes, al-Fārābī holds that, because they know true happiness and hence achieved immateriality, but shunned it for lower material ends, their souls will live after the death of the body in "eternal" torment.

Although the Brethren agree with al-Fārābī that the torment of the evil souls, at least in one of its stages before being tied again to a natural organic form, consists of their desire for material pleasures without acquiring the bodily means to attain it, this punishment (as well as the bliss of the good souls) is not considered by the Brethren to be eternal. Because al-Fārābī holds that the world is eternal, the bliss or torment which the soul experiences after separating from the body is considered by him to be eternal also. Moreover, he maintains that this eternal bliss or torment is experienced by each soul individually, as the souls do not lose their individuality in their eternal state. The Brethren, on the other hand, endorse this doctrine of the individuality of the soul regarding the experience of its reward or punishment only with regard to the lesser resurrection. However, because the Brethren believe that there will come a time when the corporeal worlds, celestial and terrestrial alike, end, they hold that this individual enjoyment or torment of the soul will last only as long as the heavens and the earth exist. When the greater resurrection occurs and the heavens and earth perish, their inhabitants must find another place where they can live. The evil, as well as the unactualized souls, the people of hell (earth), will perish because being evil or intellectually imperfect they cannot join the world of good incorporeal spirits. The virtuous knowledgeable souls, on the other hand, will survive to enjoy eternal bliss in the world of spirits. However, they will lose their individuality, as their survival consists of their reunion with the universal soul which, in its turn, will rejoin the active intellect. This is because the greater resurrection occurs when the reason for the independent existence of corporeal beings, namely, to perfect oneself, ends.



It is not only with regard to the process of actualization and the salvation to which this actualization leads that al-Fārābī and the Brethren differ, but also with regard to the various faculties of the human soul and how the soul uses them to acquire knowledge. While, according to al-Fārābī, the human soul has several faculties, namely, the vegetative, the sensitive, the imaginative and the rational, the Brethren name only three: the vegetative, the animal (whose functions include sensation among other things) and the rational. The absence of the imaginative faculty in the Brethren's classification of the faculties of the soul indicates the meagre role they assign to it in their epistemology, as well as in their theory of prophecy. This contrasts deeply with the great role assigned to it by al-Fārābī in both accounts.

Thus, we find that al-Fārābī maintains that man acquires knowledge through three faculties: sensation, imagination and reason, and that the imaginative faculty plays a vital role in this process by virtue of its intermediary position. The Brethren, on the other hand, in their discussion of how the soul acquires knowledge, differentiate between five sensitive faculties and five spiritual faculties including the imaginative. The appearance of the imaginative faculty in this account does not, however, signify any major shift in the Brethren's epistemology, as they assign to it only the role of the transmitter of the sensible impressions to the thinking faculty. It is the thinking faculty that performs two of the most important actions of the imaginative faculty as discussed by al-Fārābī, namely, receiving revelation and imagining dreams. As for its role as a retentive faculty in al-Fārābī's epistemology, it is given to a separate faculty

in the Brethren's system. It is significant also that the Brethren add two faculties that are absent from al-Fārābī's account of how knowledge is acquired. These are the verbal and the productive faculties, and by their addition the Brethren are able to avoid a certain problem that is encountered in al-Fārābī's theory of prophecy.

First of all, it has to be stressed that al-Fārābī presents us with a refined theory of prophecy that tries to rationally prove the possibility of prophecy by offering a detailed explanation of how revelation can take place. In this theory, the faculty of imagination plays a prime role and al-Fārābī makes it clear that, if it is by virtue of the rational faculty that man can become a philosopher, it is by virtue of the imaginative faculty, in addition to the rational, faculty that man receives revelation and becomes a prophet. This dichotomy between the rational and the imaginative faculties is not to be found, as we have seen, in the Brethren's epistemology. Because, in their system, the thinking faculty plays the role of the imaginative faculty, they maintain that it is by virtue of this thinking faculty that the prophet receives revelation.

Moreover, although al-Fārābī and the Brethren stress that the ultimate source of the revealed truth is God, they differ with regard to the agent that plays the intermediary role between God and the prophet. According to al-Fārābī, the prophet receives revelation directly from the active intellect. He explains how this takes place in terms of the general framework of his theory of knowledge. Hence, he writes that, because each stage of human intellect acts as the matter for the next higher stage, the acquired intellect is, thus, the matter for the

active intellect and the latter acts as the acquired intellect's form. Hence, all the forms in the active intellect become attainable by the acquired intellect which now unites with the active intellect. This knowledge then overflows from the rational soul onto the imaginative faculty which starts performing its function in imitating the intellectual knowledge through images and similitudes. The Brethren, on the other hand, state, without giving any detailed explanation, that the prophet receives revelation through the mediation of the angels, who are in fact nothing but faculties of the universal soul. The prophet's ability to communicate with these refined souls is simply stated to be due to his highly qualified intellectual and moral powers by virtue of which his soul becomes akin to the angelic souls.

This absence, in the Brethren's scheme, of a well worked out theory of prophecy, as in al-Fārābī, and the lack of interest in arguing rationally for the possibility of prophecy and revelation can be explained as being due to their acceptance of prophecy as an uncontested fact. Indeed, the detailed discussion of their political ideas reveals that, according to their theory of cycles and stages, they believe in the inevitability of the rise of prophets. Moreover, they simply state that true prophets prove their prophecy through miracles and signs.

Nevertheless, despite their oversimplification of the phenomenon of prophecy, their addition of the verbal and productive faculties solves a certain problem one faces in al-Fārābī's theory of revelation. Al-Fārābī states that when the strong imaginative faculty of the prophet is flooded by the knowledge attained by the rational soul, it produces imitative images that symbolize this knowledge.

He also maintains that this imitation of the intellectual knowledge is what is known as religion. He is not, however, quite clear as to how the prophet translates this imaginative knowledge into the language of the revealed book. The Brethren, on the other hand, are clearer than al-Fārābī on this issue. In some cases, they write, the prophet receives revelation in the form of actual speech. But in the cases where the prophet only receives the meaning of revelation, this revealed meaning is transformed into words by virtue of the verbal faculty and is then recorded in writing by virtue of the productive faculty.

A consequence of the difference between al-Fārābī and the Brethren in their respective explanation of the reception of revelation is a difference between them regarding the nature of the revealed word itself and its role. Thus, because, according to al-Fārābī, the prophet receives revelation by virtue of his imaginative faculty, the revealed word is viewed by him mainly as a language of symbols and images and, thus, is directed mainly to the non-philosophical masses. The Brethren, on the other hand, as we have seen, do not assign any role in the process of receiving revelation to the imaginative faculty. As such, the language of the revealed book is not regarded by them as the imitation of philosophic knowledge, intended only for the masses. Thus, they proclaim that the Qurʾān is directed to all humans whatever their intellectual capabilities, hence to the philosophers and the non-philosophers alike.

Al-Fārābī, thus, maintains that what makes philosophy and religion two sides of one and the same truth is their subject matter. What differentiates them though is the language in which this same subject matter is formulated;

the philosophical account is based on intellectual perception while the religious account is based on imagination. The Brethren, on the other hand, when comparing philosophy and religion, stress neither the unity of the subject matter nor the difference in the language. After all we have seen that they consider the language of the Qur'an to be suitable for all kinds of people. Moreover, they do not view the subject matter of religion as a re-statement of philosophical knowledge. Rather, they regard it, primarily, as the starting point of philosophical speculation. Thus, what unites philosophy and religion, according to the Brethren, is not their subject matter but rather the one aim to which they both aspire, namely, saving the soul from the sea of matter. The difference between them lies not so much in the language they use, but in the path each follows to secure this one aim. Thus, the path of religion is moral purification and the sincere acceptance of the tenets of revelation. The philosophical path does not differ from this, but complement it with the acquisition of the demonstrative knowledge of the revealed truth. Thus, while al-Fārābī holds that the philosopher's starting point is reason which leads him to philosophical truth, religion being the symbolization of this truth, the Brethren insist that the philosopher must begin with revelation. With this as his starting point, he ascends to a demonstrative knowledge of this revealed word, thus, becoming a philosopher.

One could thus see why al-Fārābī could maintain that historically philosophy precedes religion, since he holds that the religious account is based on the philosophical truth. The Brethren's writings, on the other hand, imply that religion precedes philosophy in time, because they maintain that philosophy

is nothing but speculation about the religious truth in order to probe its secrets. One may argue that the Brethren are inconsistent here. This is because, if the interpretation which they hold that religion precedes philosophy is true, then how could the prophet be a philosopher first? There is no evidence that the Brethren themselves are aware of this difficulty. But one has to view their position in terms of their cyclical view of history.

As we have pointed out earlier, the Brethren divide the politico-religious history of mankind into seven cycles, each of which (the first six in particular) is initiated by a prophet and is dominated by a certain religion. The religion supervening each cycle is viewed by them mainly as a renewal of the religion of the previous cycle when the latter deteriorates. One can infer from this that the prophet, the initiator of a new cycle, engages first in philosophical activity. This activity consists of his speculating about the deteriorating state of the religion of the then existing cycle. The cycle, deteriorating as it is, has been existing as a religious process initiated earlier by a religious leader. This religion, which the prophet (prior to his being endowed with prophecy) is examining philosophically, precedes this philosopher. But God endows him with the new revelation that begins the new religious cycle. Thus, although religion existed prior to the new prophet, he himself precedes his mission as a prophet by having been a philosopher.

Thus, although both al-Fārābī and the Brethren declare that philosophy is the all-encompassing and complete discipline, one must understand that this statement stems from two completely different points of view. It is true, when

al-Fārābī states that religion is an imitation of philosophy he does not use the term "imitation" in a derogatory sense. Nevertheless, he believes that religion portrays the truth in a way that befits the intellectual capabilities of the masses only. This truth is given to the philosopher in the philosophic sciences. In other words, philosophy substitutes religion for the philosopher by virtue of the intellectual knowledge it provides. The Brethren, on the other hand, when stating that philosophy is the complete discipline, do not deny the importance of religion as an integral component for the salvation, not only of the non-philosopher, but of the philosopher as well. In fact, the philosopher who starts with philosophy, without acquiring belief first, ends up by going astray.

Al-Fārābī's stand, however, saves him from a certain difficulty which the Brethren face. Al-Fārābī was able to maintain that, because philosophy and religion comprise the same truth, the philosopher is saved by virtue of the intellectual knowledge he attains which renders his rational soul immaterial, and the non-philosopher is saved by virtue of the moral life he follows in the virtuous regime which is based on a virtuous religion. The Brethren, on the other hand, because they maintain that religious facts act only as a starting point and that man should acquire their meaning philosophically, hold that it is only the true philosopher, whose observation of the revealed word is at once intellectual and pious, who will be saved. Thus neither taqlīd nor moral virtues can attain salvation for the soul. It is ironic that the Brethren who start by greatly stressing the importance of religion, end up by maintaining that religion alone cannot gain salvation for the soul, while al-Fārābī who emphasizes the importance of

philosophy before any other knowledge holds that religion rescues those who are intellectually unable to grasp any other higher knowledge. It is in these terms that one can maintain that al-Fārābī does not always elevate philosophy at the expense of religion, whereas the Brethren do this very thing. Religion for both, however, is at the basis of their political ideas. This brings us to their political thought.

### III Political Thought

The differences in the cosmological views and doctrines of the soul between al-Fārābī and the Brethren are at the basis of the differences between their political ideas. If one wants to single out that characteristic of each system that perhaps more than anything else explains the diversion of their political ideas, it would be their respective concepts of an eternal world and one that is transient.

It is partly because al-Fārābī thinks in terms of an eternal world that his political thinking represents a genuine political philosophy. Implicit in his doctrine of the world's eternity is the Aristotelian belief that man has always existed in the past and will always exist in the future.<sup>17</sup> The conditions necessary for the formation of a "virtuous city" on this earth are, thus, studied by him as being in principle possible regardless of whether they are realizable or not. One must recall here that al-Fārābī regards political theory as a demonstrative science. It is a science that functions largely in terms of a final cause, the final cause, in this instance, being the attainment of happiness. True enough,



he is concerned with happiness in the hereafter, but this, for him, is not accomplished without attaining intellectual and moral fulfillment and, hence, happiness in this world. But this fulfillment and happiness are best attained in a society that is harmonious and happy.<sup>18</sup> Hence, although al-Fārābī does not lose sight of transcendent happiness in the hereafter, his political philosophy concentrates on the realization of a happy society in this world. Put in another way, his main preoccupation in his political writings is with the conditions that produce a political order that is virtuous and happy in this world.

This cannot be said about the Brethren, for whom this transient life is but a milestone in a process that ultimately leads to the annihilation of this world and the absorption of human souls, first into the universal soul and then into the active intellect where they lose their identity. This must be kept in mind when we discuss some of the details of their respective political ideas.

Having said this, it does not mean that there are no other factors that explain the differences between their ideas. One of these factors is that the Brethren are eclectic and will incorporate whatever ideas that help support their eschatological view. Al-Fārābī, on the other hand, is essentially a systematic thinker who builds on the legacy of Plato, even though he incorporates in his view Islamic religious, as well as other, ideas.

In making the comparison between their political ideas we will first sum up those of al-Fārābī's system beginning with leadership and then the concept of the state. We will follow this with the ideas of the Brethren on these two questions indicating the similarities and showing the differences.

To turn to al-Fārābī first, the attainment of happiness is the motif which underlies his entire philosophy and, hence, his political thought as an integral part of this philosophical system. In order for man to attain happiness, he must lead a rational and moral life. But man, being a social and political animal, cannot do this alone. He must live in a society where cooperation is basic. But men's capacities differ. Hence, society must be organized hierarchically according to men's abilities. This also means that each level of this hierarchy must have leaders. Leadership means, among other things, instruction and instruction, in turn, is effective if it is understood. Hence, there is a hierarchy of instruction conditioned by the different capacities of men to learn and the kind and quality of knowledge they can absorb.

At the highest level, there is the virtuous leader who can guide each and every member of the community towards happiness, while he himself does not need any other human to guide him. This is because he has actually acquired every kind of knowledge. The existence of this virtuous leader is the first necessary requirement for the establishment of the virtuous regime. This first leader of the virtuous regime must be a philosopher-king who is also a prophet-lawgiver. In addition to this, as we have indicated, he should possess twelve natural qualities, and must also acquire six other conditions that ought to supervene after maturity. The leader who combines in himself all twelve qualities and, at least, five of the six conditions, and who is a philosopher and a prophet is, according to al-Fārābī, "the cause" that can bring into existence the virtuous regime. For such a leader knows the true nature of happiness, as well as, the voluntary actions

and dispositions that can bring about its attainment. Moreover, he has the practical ability to lead and persuade people to do the actions conducive to happiness and, hence, can direct the community towards its achievement.

In the effort to bring about the virtuous regime and to guide its citizens towards happiness, the supreme ruler must order the regime to be in tune with the order of the universe, that is, to be harmonious and hierarchically ordered, imitating the celestial order. It is thus that the political and social system will function in concord. Moreover, he must direct the citizens, each according to his intellectual capabilities, towards the knowledge of happiness and the actions that bring it about. To the philosophical elite, he should disclose theoretical knowledge which constitutes true happiness, using the demonstrative method. With the non-philosophical masses, he must refrain from any philosophical communication using only an exemplary image of the realities of creation. At the same time, he should employ the method of persuasion in order to mould the moral character of the masses and arouse them to do the virtuous deeds conducive to happiness. Finally, he must strive to eliminate from the state both voluntary and natural evil.

Although the emergence of the virtuous leader is a necessary pre-requisite for the establishment of the virtuous regime, al-Fārābī does not hold that his appearance will inevitably lead to the bringing into existence of a virtuous state. The people, al-Fārābī maintains, might reject the virtuous leader's purpose and attempts, might not listen to him or might disobey him. Hence, al-Fārābī defines the virtuous regime as the regime in which people will accept the leadership

of the virtuous ruler and come together and cooperate with the aim of attaining true happiness in this life and in the life to come.

This aim is not attained in any kind of human gathering. Now, al-Fārābī divides human associations into the complete and the incomplete, depending on whether or not the association forms a comprehensive political unit. Each of the complete associations is, in turn, divided into the virtuous and the non-virtuous, depending on the final aim of the regime, that is, on whether or not the leadership aims at true happiness.

Hence, if the virtuous regimes are those regimes whose citizens cooperate regarding the things which bring about true happiness, the non-virtuous regimes are those which substitute for true happiness a lower material end and set it up as their ultimate desired aim. Al-Fārābī lists different types of non-virtuous regimes in accordance with the various false aims they follow. A non-virtuous regime obtains, according to him, either when it is initially based on a false religion or when a virtuous regime deteriorates after the death of its founder.

However, al-Fārābī holds that, once the virtuous leader establishes the virtuous regime, then if certain conditions are fulfilled in his successors, this virtuous regime can continue existing, offering worldly perfection to its citizens and eternal salvation for their souls.

As we will now see, it is in his political thought more than in his cosmology or psychology, that one finds similarities between al-Fārābī and the Brethren. However, because, as mentioned earlier, their political ideas stem from their respective philosophical settings which are quite distinct, their political ideas,

in the final analysis, differ also. It is here also, as we hope to show, that their distinct starting points, one philosophical, the other religious, play the greatest role in moulding these distinct political viewpoints.

As with al-Fārābī, the attainment of happiness is, for the Brethren, the ultimate aim of their philosophy. Unlike al-Fārābī, however, they couch their description of the nature of happiness in unmistakably religious terminology. Hence, as we mentioned earlier, although they agree with al-Fārābī that happiness consists in the ability of the soul to dispense with matter, they make the ultimate aim of the soul in attaining this status, the acquisition of the angelic rank, either in its potential form, during earthly life, or in its actual form, after the death of the body.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, they add to these two stages of happiness a third stage which is not found in al-Fārābī's system, namely, the stage of the complete reunion of the particular souls with the universal soul where they lose their individuality. This stage, which occurs when the corporeal world ceases to exist, constitutes for them the ultimate happiness and the absolute good.

In order for man to save his soul and attain happiness, they write, he must endeavour to acquire true knowledge, good morals, true opinions and beliefs, and good deeds. In other words, they are echoing the same notion found in al-Fārābī that man ought to lead a rational and moral life in order to attain happiness and salvation. The Brethren, however, dwell on this notion at great length, determining the factors that constitute intellectual and moral perfection and repeatedly listing them. Like al-Fārābī, they also believe that to attain happiness man ought to come together with his kind because he is a social animal

who can neither fulfill his necessary material needs nor attain his perfection in isolation. But here again the Brethren add a religious dimension to their discussion which is absent in al-Fārābī. Thus, to explain why man is a social animal they introduce the concept of the absolute man. When God willed the earth to exist, they argue, He made His viceroy here the form of humanity, or the absolute man, in which all crafts and professions, as well as intellectual and moral virtues, exist collectively. In other words, what the Brethren are saying is that humans are obliged to come together to form social gatherings. This is because God has created humanity in such a way that its individual members vary in their capacities, complement one another and, hence, necessarily cooperate for the purpose of survival and perpetuation and of perfecting themselves. It is thus understandable why they stress the fact that the sociability and love which facilitate the life of humans as social beings are embedded by God in human nature. Moreover, they maintain that God also informs human nature with a disposition to shy away from other humans, a disposition which results in the dispersion of humans on earth and the establishment of different communities.

The Brethren agree with al-Fārābī that humans differ in their intellectual and moral capabilities and that these differences must reflect in a hierarchically organized community. Because knowledge, for them, is the main factor by which man gains salvation, the good regime must ascend from the less knowledgeable to the more knowledgeable. All people, they agree with al-Fārābī, need a teacher. Every teacher, in his turn, receives knowledge from a teacher higher than him in rank until we reach the one man who does not receive his knowledge from

any human being. This is the prophet whose ultimate source of knowledge, according to them, is God through the mediation of the angels. Moreover, like al-Fārābī, they hold that the knowledge possessed by the prophet is not only prophetic, but is also philosophic. Thus, although they differ with al-Fārābī regarding the nature of the process of revelation and the manner of its reception, as well as the constituents of philosophical knowledge, they agree with him that the founder and first ruler of the good state must be a prophet and a philosopher. It must, however, be noted that the Brethren view the founder of the good state primarily as a prophet. Thus, we find them always referring to the founder of the good state as the "lawgiver". This is in contrast with al-Fārābī who, although maintaining that the founder of the virtuous regime is a prophet-lawgiver, always refers to him as the "first leader," thereby giving a more political tone to his argument.

The Brethren maintain that the prophet-lawgiver ought to enjoy forty-six qualities by nature. When enumerating them, however, they mention only twelve which happen to be the same qualities of the first leader listed by al-Fārābī. They do not, however, list the six conditions which al-Fārābī maintains must be possessed by the first leader after maturity. It is true that the three conditions of wisdom, practical wisdom and excellence of the faculty of persuasion are implicit in their discussion of the role and nature of the lawgiver. There is, however, no mention of the three other conditions. Thus, two of these three conditions, namely those that relate to the ability of the leader to fight the holy war in person and to the absence of any physical impediments that could prevent

him from participating in the holy war, are not mentioned. In fact, they are negated by their statement that what is important about the leader is his political abilities, not his physical strength or appearance. The third condition which they exclude and which al-Fārābī stresses is the ability of the leader to produce a representation of demonstrative truth in terms of images. This exclusion is understandable. As we have seen, the Brethren do not view the revealed word mainly as an imitation of the philosophical knowledge.

The Brethren, however, like al-Fārābī, hold that the lawgiver must endorse certain beliefs and opinions which he should include in the religion he is revealing. Generally speaking, they enumerate the same metaphysical and psychological beliefs stated by al-Fārābī in the Book of Religion.<sup>20</sup> It should be remarked, however, that, in the light of the discussion of their cosmologies and psychologies, it is clear that the nature of these beliefs, as understood by them, differs drastically. Moreover, in addition to these metaphysical and psychological beliefs, al-Fārābī, unlike the Brethren, enumerates other opinions that relate directly to the political domain, stating that these must also be included in the religion revealed by the first leader of the virtuous regime. Thus, he writes, the virtuous religion must describe the qualities and attributes of the prophets and virtuous leaders, past and present, as well as the condition of those who followed their example and the destiny of their souls. It must also describe the non-virtuous rulers and their followers. Moreover, al-Fārābī holds, religion must employ similitudes and images that give a symbolic representation of the hierarchical, cooperative structure that should prevail in the regime governed by this religion. It is true



that the Brethren, like al-Fārābī, maintain that this hierarchical organization of the regime is one of the tasks of the leader, yet they do not incorporate it as a part of this system of religious belief.

This is not to say, however, that the political dimension is absent altogether from the Brethren's discussion of the leadership of the good state. Like al-Fārābī, who writes that the profession of the first leader of the virtuous regime is kingly combined with divine revelation,<sup>21</sup> the Brethren hold that kingship is an essential component of the leadership of the prophet-lawgiver. The Brethren, however, differ from al-Fārābī in two respects. First of all, as we have seen, al-Fārābī emphasizes the importance of statecraft for the first leader of the virtuous regime, stating that if he lacks political ability, he is a false philosopher who can never become the supreme ruler. The Brethren, on the other hand, explicitly elevate prophethood over kingship. It is true that they declare that neither prophethood nor kingship can exist one without the other, yet they insist that it is kingship which serves prophethood, prophecy being the essence, kingship the accident. Hence, they maintain that, despite the preoccupation of kingship with temporal matters, God wills that prophecy join forces with it in order to fulfill the ultimate aim, not of kingship, but of prophethood, that is happiness of the soul in the hereafter.

Secondly, al-Fārābī treats kingship as an integral component of the first leadership of the virtuous regime. He views the first leader as being not only a philosopher and a prophet but as a king, and rejects the notion of a collective first leadership. The Brethren, on the other hand, treat prophethood and kingship

as two separate components of the first leadership of the good state. Thus, unlike him, they accept the fact that the first leadership could be shared by a prophet and a king, and must not always be combined in one person. Hence, unlike al-Fārābī, they offer separate discussions of the functions of prophethood and kingship. True enough, one notes in their discussion an overlap between the tasks of the prophet and those of the king. It is quite clear, however, that prophethood for them centres around revelation, propagating the faith and guiding the souls to the path of righteousness and salvation. In other words, the prophet, for them, is essentially a religious figure. The tasks of kingship, on the other hand, are concerned mainly with the running of the state as a political institution. Even so, it should be kept in mind that these political tasks are basically also religious because kingship's main role is to guard and to enforce the revealed religion. Hence, we find that the two tasks listed by al-Fārābī regarding guiding the people towards happiness, each according to his intellectual capabilities, and that of eliminating evil<sup>22</sup> are included by the Brethren among the tasks of prophethood. The tasks of organizing the state in a hierarchical, harmonious order and that of launching jihād, are, however, included by them among the tasks of kingship.

Although, as we have seen, there are striking similarities between al-Fārābī and the Brethren in their discussions of the nature and the role of the first leader of the virtuous regime, there are two basic differences. First, as we have seen, al-Fārābī maintains that the destiny of the people in the hereafter depends mainly on the type of political regime they live in and hence on the type of

political leadership by which they are governed. The Brethren, on the other hand, insist that the absence of the virtuous leader, and hence of the good regime, does not nullify the individual's responsibility of purifying and perfecting his soul. Thus, unlike al-Fārābī, the Brethren include among the beliefs taught by the prophet the idea that every human being is individually responsible for his acts and will be individually judged for them.<sup>23</sup> (This idea includes the doctrine they often maintain, and which is also encountered in Mu'tazilite thought, that God does not demand of His subjects that which is beyond their capacity.)

Secondly, al-Fārābī's language suggests that there is no guarantee that the first ruler will ever emerge and, if he emerges, that the people will yield to his attempts at founding a virtuous regime. The Brethren's cyclical theory, on the other hand, implies that the advent of the prophet-lawgiver is inevitable. God, they hold, created the world of generation and corruption to fulfill a certain end, namely, the perfection of the souls and the return of all to God. Hence, the sending of the prophets to guide the souls becomes inevitable. It follows that the establishment of the state of good people is, in their thought, also inevitable. This is because the advent of a prophet-lawgiver does not only mean that a new religion is revealed. It also means that a state, within which this new religion is defended, is born.

In his exposition of the idea of the state, al-Fārābī is a genuine "theorist" in that he develops a theory of the state systematically and without any direct reference to a historical political entity. This cannot be said of the Brethren. As indicated earlier, he conceives political science as one of the "theoretical

virtues," a demonstrative science in the Aristotelian sense. Thus, he seems to follow the Aristotelian ideal of science as dealing with the universal not the particular; and, thus, he does not make any direct reference to the Islamic, or any of the other religiously based states. In this, he is very different from the Brethren who discuss the political regime primarily in relation to the Islamic state founded by the prophet Muhammad and Biblical religiously based states mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Moreover, al-Fārābī, as a theorist, is systematic. This is seen in his classification of human gatherings dividing them into complete and incomplete, the criterion being the political suitability of fulfilling the goal which they conceive of as happiness, regardless of whether or not in their understanding of happiness they err. He then makes another division, this time of the complete human associations according to their size, into the city, the nation and the world-state, the latter being the absolutely complete human association. He then elaborates further on this. Each of these politically complete units can either be a virtuous or a non-virtuous regime, depending on their final end. In addition to this, al-Fārābī classifies the non-virtuous regimes into different types, giving a diagnostic explanation for their being what they are.

This systematic approach is absent in the Brethren. Moreover, there are differences in their conception of the "virtuous city." For the Brethren, the virtuous city is not, as it is with al-Fārābī, the smallest complete political unit, but rather refers, in their thought, to their spiritual society of knowledgeable people who strive for intellectual perfection while surrounded by a sea of

ignorance. In their discussion of the state in worldly political terms they replace al-Fārābī's concept of the "virtuous city" with their concept of the state of good people. Here we, nevertheless, encounter a similarity. In both regimes, the citizens acquire, according to their different intellectual capacities, knowledge of the specific real nature of things, hence of the nature of true happiness. This state of good people, in their thought, opposes the state of evil people. We do not meet in their writings, however, any classification of the types of "evil" states as we find in al-Fārābī. Thus, although on rare occasions they use the term "unjust cities,"<sup>24</sup> they do not categorize it in terms of specific types.

What really distinguishes al-Fārābī's discussions of political regimes is the emphasis that he places on the role of leadership, an emphasis that is greatly reduced in the Brethren's writings. Thus, his discussion of the virtuous city focusses mainly on the virtuous leader, his nature and attributes, the conditions he must meet and the duties he must undertake. People are virtuous and happy when they are ruled by a virtuous leader. The regime itself is defined as virtuous when it is governed by a virtuous ruler and when all its parts serve the purposes of this ruler. By the same token, the people and the regime are defined by al-Fārābī as being non-virtuous when the leadership is itself non-virtuous.

By contrast, the Brethren's political ideas, scattered and incidental as they are, concentrate on the notion of the state itself, rather than on that of leadership. Hence, their definition of the state of good people and the state of bad people is based on the presence or absence of true knowledge in the regime. It is true that, like al-Fārābī, they speak of the importance of the leader as

the teacher and the guide to this true knowledge. Nevertheless, his absence does not justify for them the prevalence of ignorance and immorality and hence the emergence of the evil state. This is because, as they maintain, it is incumbent on every individual, when the worthy leader is absent, to make reason his guide in acting rationally and morally.

Thus, we find that, for al-Fārābī, the deterioration of the virtuous regime into a non-virtuous one is explained largely in terms of the succession of the virtuous leadership by a non-virtuous one. The Brethren, on the other hand, explain the corruption of the state of good people mainly in terms of the deterioration of the religious law. The deterioration of the religious law is not the responsibility of only the leadership that succeeds the prophet-lawgiver, but is mainly the responsibility of the citizens of the state as a whole. Thus, the Brethren write that the good state continues after the death of its founder when the members of the whole community unite and cooperate to preserve and implement the religious law as revealed by the prophet-lawgiver. Corruption starts when "the dialecticians" (ahl al-jadal), seeking worldly prestige, introduce innovations in the various branches of the religious law. The leadership supports them and the masses blindly follow their opinions and accept them as being the truth. The wisemen, the possessors of true knowledge, hide to guard the wisdom of God against those unworthy of receiving it. Sectarian strife deepens and ignorance accumulates. All the members of the state, and not only its ruler, become responsible for the bankruptcy of the regime. It should be remarked, however, that the hiding of the wisemen is not seen by them so much as a measure to conceal true knowledge

altogether as it is to give it to those worthy of receiving it. Thus, the philosopher, who has this knowledge and conceals it, does not contribute to the corruption of the state. On the contrary, as we shall shortly point out, he plays an active positive role while living in the evil regime. This is in contrast with al-Fārābī's views concerning the philosopher in a non-virtuous regime, who is urged to leave it for a virtuous one.

Dwelling on the notion of the religious law being the main reason for the state's birth, continuity and deterioration, the Brethren developed a cyclical theory of the rise and fall of the political regimes, unheard of in al-Fārābī's system. It is true that al-Fārābī, in the Attainment of Happiness,<sup>25</sup> but more so in the Book of Letters,<sup>26</sup> maintains that philosophy precedes religion in time. However, even if this statement has within it the germ of a cyclical theory (and this is very doubtful), it does not bear any resemblance to the Brethren's cyclical theory of states. For one thing, the Brethren do not view the cycles as constituting a cycle of philosophy followed by a cycle of religion. All these cycles, for the Brethren, are religious. Each cycle represents the renewal of the deteriorating religion that dominated the previous cycle and the resumption of the power of the ailing state in a stronger one, based on the new form of religion. Thus, these states form links in a progressive historical chain of events highlighted by a series of prophetic revelations that unite humanity as a whole. This theme, as we shall see, will greatly affect their notion of the world-state and shape it in a way that is quite foreign to al-Fārābī, and which is premised on the doctrine of a transient world, finite in its temporal duration.

The state, for the Brethren, is thus essentially a religious state. It is true that for al-Fārābī the virtuous regime is a religious regime in the sense that religion, which is a symbolic copy of philosophy, necessarily exists in it for the sake of the masses. But this is quite different from the Brethren's views concerning the nature of religion and hence its role in the state. For one thing, as we have explained earlier, the Brethren, unlike al-Fārābī, do not hold that religion is based on philosophy, but rather that religion is the starting point of philosophy. Moreover, unlike al-Fārābī's theoretical and universalist attitude, the Brethren specify that these religious states are established by six leading prophet-lawgivers, namely, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. What we have in effect here is a theology totally foreign to al-Fārābī. As we have indicated, this theology is based on the view that the particular souls sinned in their desire for matter. God allowed them to join matter, which in the Brethren's system means the creation of man in time. To bring back humanity away from this sin and to perfection, God sends these prophets to guide people and to establish states where He is truly known and rightly worshipped.

Two notions derive from this view which are not to be found in al-Fārābī's political theory. First of all, there are not only cycles of good and evil states, but the progression is moreover inevitable. They argue that God, in order to elevate humanity to the utmost possible perfection, determines human history to follow a course of seven major cycles each of which is destined to drive humanity a step further towards perfection. Hence, the deterioration of states might appear as evil; but, if viewed within the whole framework of the "dialectic" of history,



it will be seen as conducive to good. This is because, according to them, God who designed the history of mankind in this series of religious and political cycles will not permit the utter deterioration of His religion or of the political regime within which the religion is guarded. Hence, they argue, the succession of these progressive cycles, the aim of which is the betterment of the world, is sanctioned by God. This divine sanction finds expression in astral conjunctions that no human being can either stop, alter, accelerate or slow down.

Secondly, because the establishment of the state of good people is inevitable for the Brethren, we find them advocating a pacifist attitude towards the unjust leadership. This view does not have an equivalent in al-Fārābī's writings. First of all, it has to be noted that, when al-Fārābī speaks about the non-virtuous regimes, he does not give a detailed discussion as to how such regimes can be transformed into virtuous ones. It is, however, implicit in his writings that this takes place "if" a virtuous ruler appears and "if" his attempts to govern the regime and rule the masses are not hampered by their rejection and disobedience. One can infer from this view that al-Fārābī is against the unruliness of the masses in a non-virtuous regime. But this disobedience, it has to be noted, is criticized by him when it is directed towards the virtuous man who, according to him, must naturally become the leader. But what about the masses' favouring of their non-virtuous leader? It is obvious that al-Fārābī views the masses' obedience of their non-virtuous leadership as malicious. This is implicit in his criticism directed towards the non-virtuous regimes in the Political Regime, to the effect that it is almost impossible for a virtuous man to obtain the leadership

of such a regime, and that if this were to happen, he would either be killed or toppled.<sup>27</sup> This could be the reason why al-Fārābī maintains that the philosopher must emigrate from the non-virtuous regime to a virtuous one and that, if the latter regime does not exist, then death is better for the philosopher than life. In other words, al-Fārābī does not see any possible role for the true philosopher in corrupt regimes.

The Brethren's stand regarding this issue of the duty of the masses and the role of the philosopher in a corrupt regime is quite distinct from al-Fārābī's. Since the succession of the evil state by a good one is determined by divine sanction, people do not have to engage in active political resistance aimed at the ousting of the corrupt political regime. On the contrary, obedience from the masses and the philosophers alike is due to the unjust ruler. This is because God created man to be a social animal, determining his history through cycles of religiously based political regimes. Hence, a state is indispensable, though it might be evil and corrupt, if man is to survive and to achieve perfection. Obedience to the leader is due even if he is a tyrant because he holds the state together as a political unit and prevents it from falling apart.

The politically pacifist attitude preached by the Brethren, particularly on the part of the philosophers, is not identical with al-Fārābī's view that the philosopher has no role in a corrupt regime. For the Brethren, the philosopher has a role in such regimes. This role is on the intellectual level. The philosopher has the responsibility of transmitting philosophical knowledge to those worthy of and able to acquire it. Thus, they write that when they hide, they do this,

not out of fear of the unjust rulers, but to protect wisdom from being violated and to put it only at the disposal of those worthy of it. This is because keeping it from the latter is as unjust as granting it to those unworthy of it. This intellectual activism is, however, preached by them for a political reason, this being the preparation of the people for the coming of the seventh leader and the cooperation to achieve intellectual and moral perfection while waiting for his establishment of the good state.

The Brethren's discussion of this aim and the role of the philosopher with regard to it is historically based. As indicated earlier, this distinguishes their thought from al-Fārābī's political theory. Thus, we find that their discussion here is connected with the turbulent fourth/tenth century in which they lived and involves their conception of Islamic history. Thus, they write that the Islamic state as established by the prophet Muḥammad was a good state. The process of its deterioration to an evil state started after the period of the first four caliphs. This state, according to them, reached its utmost limit of corruption in the time of their writing of the Epistles. Hence, according to their cyclical theory, it is due to be replaced by a new state of good people. The appearance of the seventh leader, the initiator of the last cycle in the history of humanity and the establishment of the state of good people are inevitable and close at hand. Practical measures, nevertheless, ought to be taken while one is still living in the evil state, waiting for the establishment of the good regime. Lest one should drown in the ocean of ignorance and immorality prevailing in the evil regime, possessors of true knowledge and those who seek it ought to cooperate.

This cooperation finds expression in the formation of a spiritual city of knowledge, the society of the Brethren of Purity. It is established on the belief that, while political obedience is due to the unjust rulers of their period, intellectual disobedience is a must. This is because, as we indicated, they do not hold with al-Fārābī, that the destiny of the souls is determined by the virtuousness of the political leadership, but rather by their individual acts and achievements. Hence, in times when evil controls the regime, people must make reason their leader over their souls, thereby controlling their animal passions. They refer to their spiritual society as the ship of salvation during a period when the prevailing political circumstances cannot furnish people with the conditions conducive to salvation.

Although the state of good people as established by the seventh leader is, according to their cyclical theory, the final stage in humanity's journey towards perfection, it does not represent a political ideal in the same sense the virtuous city does in al-Fārābī's political thought. It is true that both al-Fārābī and the Brethren believe that worldly perfection is a pre-requisite for perfection in the hereafter and that true happiness ought to be attained here first to be fully experienced and "eternally" enjoyed there. However, because the world of generation and corruption is, for al-Fārābī, eternal, the worldly virtuous regime is considered by him as the embodiment of the utmost political perfection and its realization (should this ever take place) is viewed as being an ultimate aim in itself. It is, hence, "the" ideal earthly existence. The Brethren, on the other hand, view this world as being transient. Moreover, being the home of the material,

it is an expression of imperfection. Hence, any system that obtains in this transient, imperfect world cannot be "the" ideal. The ideal, for the Brethren, can never be represented by any worldly political regime. It can be derived from their philosophy that the seven major political regimes are but a divine response to mankind's imperfection and an attempt to elevate it, not to perfection, but rather to what good can be attained within the limits of the life of the flesh. The complete and perfect ideal is realizable in a world of spirits. This happens only when the souls abandon the bodies. But this means the annihilation of the corporeal world and with it its religiously based political regimes, the token of mankind's imperfection. The true ideal, the utopia of collective ultimate happiness and absolute good will then obtain.

One final theme that relates to the political ideas of al-Fārābī and the Brethren needs discussion. This is the notion of the world-state and the theme of jihād that relates to it. We have seen that, according to al-Fārābī, the most complete human association is the association of all humans in the entire inhabited world. This world-state, according to him, consists of a number of virtuous, yet distinct, nations which cooperate to achieve true happiness despite their specifically different characteristics. Hence, for this world-state to materialize, all non-virtuous nations ought to be transformed into virtuous ones. In order for this transformation to take place, war, which in only one text is referred to as "holy war,"<sup>28</sup> must be launched by the virtuous regimes against the non-virtuous ones. The aim of this war is, thus, not merely to bring non-virtuous regimes under the control of virtuous ones, but rather to lead them to virtue.

This happens through the establishment of virtuous religions, which represent for the citizens of these regimes, the universal philosophical truth using the language and the symbols appropriate to their distinctive cultural milieus. Consequently, al-Fārābī, as we have seen, allows the existence of different virtuous regimes. The summation of the different virtuous regimes that follow these different virtuous religions is what he meant by the virtuous world-state. When this materializes there will be no need for more wars. Although al-Fārābī does not state this explicitly, it is implicit in his discussion.

If we examine now the Brethren's views concerning the world-state and jihād to see how they compare with al-Fārābī's, we will find that they are quite different. For one thing, al-Fārābī makes his discussion of this issue as universal as possible. Although he mentions the term "jihād" in one text, he is reluctant to refer to any particular state or situation. The Brethren, on the other hand, make their discussion in terms of "jihād" and with direct reference to the Islamic state in its relation to the "people of the book." More important than this is the fact that the Brethren's cyclical theory of history, which is absent from al-Fārābī's political thought, plays the main role in shaping their views concerning jihād and the world-state. Thus, although they agree with al-Fārābī that differences between religions are normal and inevitable, their statement stems from a completely different premise. For al-Fārābī, different religions exist because, even though they all are imitations of the one philosophical truth, they are expressed in symbolization appropriate to the different cultures they address. The Brethren, on the other hand, basing themselves on their cyclical theory,

hold that religions differ although they come from the same God mainly because they are revealed in different historical periods. It follows that while we find in al-Fārābī a recognition of the possibility of the simultaneous existence of different "virtuous" religions, this is absent in the Brethren's discussion. What their cyclical theory implies is that, at any specific moment, only one perfect religion exists which renders all other religions superfluous. Hence, while al-Fārābī describes the world-state as the state where different nations which follow different virtuous religions cooperate, the Brethren write that the entire world becomes like one man, only if it is dominated by one religion and, hence, one state.<sup>29</sup> Their statement is conditional, and according to their cyclical theory, one can reason that this state will take place only when the seventh leader comes and reveals the inner meaning of the religion, hence showing the unity of all religions.

Meanwhile, the Brethren, like al-Fārābī, tolerate the existence of different religions. But, for al-Fārābī, the acceptance of the simultaneous existence of different religions is qualified by the fact that they all must be virtuous. If not, war must be launched. War is launched for the sake of the masses in order to bring to them virtuous religions. These virtuous religions will help transform the regime into a virtuous one. When this happens, mutual understanding and cooperation among the different nations must replace wars. The Brethren, on the other hand, tolerate the simultaneous existence of different religions, which, for them, are not all virtuous but rather differ in their degree of completeness. Their tolerance is for practical as well as theoretical reasons. Practically speaking,

they hold that it is very difficult for someone to relinquish the religion in which he was brought up. From a theoretical point of view they hold that all religions contain the one truth revealed by the same God to all His prophets. They differ only with regard to the daily rules and regulation and also with regard to how this one truth is represented. Islam, according to their cyclical theory, is the most complete revealed religion.

Nevertheless, jihād is zealously advocated by them, not to spread Islam as a dogma, but rather to enforce Islam as a set of laws. This stand is in sharp contrast with al-Fārābī's. This is because what the Brethren are actually saying is that jihād is not to convert people of the book to Islam, the more perfect and complete dogma, according to them, but rather to enforce Islam as a government on the subjects of other political regimes based on religions other than Islam. In other words, jihād is viewed by the Brethren as a means of subordinating the less perfect regimes to the political domination of the more perfect, without attempting to convert them. Jihād is thus proclaimed by them as being a political, not a religious, issue. Different religions include the same dogma preached by Islam yet dressed in a different garb. Hence, there is no instant need to fight over the dogma. Unity among followers of different religions will come, as God ordained it, with the seventh leader who will unveil the dogma and reveal its unity.

But Islam, which according to the historical rationality ordained by God, represents the final stage in mankind's elevation towards perfection must always have the upper hand as long as its cycle endures. It is only a state within



which Islam supervenes politically that can secure the dominance of Islam. Hence, while Islam is tolerant, according to this interpretation, towards the followers of other religions, it is intolerant towards the political regimes based on a religion different from Islam. Jihād must always be launched by the Islamic state against the other un-Islamic states as long as they exist. Unlike al-Fārābī, they do not hold that mutual understanding and cooperation among different religiously-based states can ever materialize. The world-state will never exist until the whole world adopts one religion.

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The Brethren present in their Epistles a systematic, well worked-out world view. Despite repetitiveness, sometimes obscurity and even contradiction, their philosophical structure is comprehensive, coherent, with a final, well thought-out and precise aim. In this cohesiveness they do not differ from al-Fārābī. This is not to say, however, that the two systems of thought, in their totalities, are identical or even close.

The Brethren's philosophy, in its ultimate analysis, is a religious philosophy. It is targeted towards the afterlife. This earthly life is important in as much as it represents the only path man can follow in order to arrive at his ultimate destination. Their main concern is man and his *raison d'être*. Man is created as a result of a sin and in order to drive himself away from this sin and towards perfection, he must use the faculty of reason which God endowed on him. Hence the importance of philosophy as a necessary tool for realizing this end, for

emulating God in His perfection and for endeavouring to become like Him as much as human capacity allows. But philosophy, as complete a discipline as it is, does not supplant religion. Religion, or the revealed word, is the starting point of rational thinking and the final court in which rational findings are either confirmed or else returned to reason for further deliberation. Salvation, however, is gained only through a rational understanding of the revealed truth and a moral life within the framework of the religious law.

This rational understanding and moral purification are the individual responsibility of each and every man as far as his capacities permit. A good political regime facilitates these self-perfecting and self-purifying activities. But the absence of such a regime does not relieve man from the responsibility of perfecting himself. Because the purpose of this transient life is fulfilled only when everyone leads a life of wisdom and morality, it becomes the duty of all humans to group together and assist each other in acquiring, deepening and refining their knowledge and morals. To learn and to teach is the good. When this is accomplished, the souls will return to their real abode whence they came, the corporeal world will perish and ultimate happiness and the absolute good will be realized.

Within this framework, political ideas can be found. Incidental and scattered as they are, they can be extracted and related to the Brethren's philosophy as a whole. Nevertheless, in a philosophy that focusses mainly on the afterlife and which views the earthly life as transient, political thought, which is concerned with the organization of this worldly life, becomes quite subordinate. Indeed, the

political ideas in their Epistles are closely related to their transcendent views and are motivated solely by an interest, not in this life, but in the life to come. Hence, for example, their cyclical theory of states is formulated in a way to show that humanity is destined to be led to perfection and, ultimately, to annihilation; the state is said to be important as a political institution because it guards God's revealed truth, the cornerstone of any process of intellectual and moral perfection, which in its turn will help bring about the end of the world; the founder of the good state is viewed mainly as a religious figure who helps man in his ethical and intellectual struggle; and men, in the absence of a good leader, should help each other to fight and win this struggle which again will lead to the perishing of this world. Education becomes their measure of political action, a measure which is not directed towards the reform of the political regime as such, but towards the perfection of the individual man instead, and with an eye on his salvation and rescue from this material world.

This cannot be said about al-Fārābī. It is true that, like the Brethren, he is concerned with the moral and intellectual perfection of man as an individual. However, he is equally concerned with the ideal political regime within which man's ethical and intellectual perfection is achieved. It is true that salvation and attainment of happiness in the hereafter concern al-Fārābī as much as they concern the Brethren. Moreover, they both believe that, for happiness to be attained in the hereafter, it has to be achieved here and now first. But for al-Fārābī, unlike the Brethren, the type of political regime and the kind of leadership determine, to a great extent, man's earthly happiness and, hence, his

ultimate happiness in the hereafter. Moreover, humanity, for al-Fārābī, is here to stay, not to perish, and hence life on this earth will continue to exist. Thus, earthly life is important in its own right.

Thus, for al-Fārābī, the existence of a virtuous political regime is important both in itself and as a prerequisite for eternal happiness. Hence, his political thought revolves around the realization of this virtuous regime. On the other hand, for the Brethren, the earthly life is a prison from which the souls must seek to free themselves in order to bring the world to an end and to experience happiness which is truly and fully attained only after the destruction of the corporeal world takes place. This elevation from the material world is the responsibility of each individual. Hence, the cornerstone of the Brethren's political thought is not the political regime and its virtuousness but rather man and his perfection. Man's perfection can be achieved regardless of the goodness or evilness of the political regime. In times of corruption, immorality and absence of virtuous leadership, it is realized through an ethical and educational programme that depends greatly on the cooperation and sacrifice of the individual members of the society, the ultimate aim being the rescue from the material world and the annihilation of the worldly life and its political regimes altogether.

ENDNOTES

1. The comparisons in this chapter are based on the expositions in chapters two, five and six. References in the notes will be confined to new information or further comment when needed.
2. VC, pp. 42-43; Siyāṣah, p. 49.
3. VC, pp. 25-29.
4. VC, pp. 30-31; Siyāṣah, p. 45.
5. RIS, 3:515-16.
6. RIS, 3:513-14.
7. Siyāṣah, p. 34.
8. RIS, 1:54-55; 2:275, 473.
9. It is true that the Brethren hold that it is the universal soul, and not God, that judges the individual souls on the day of judgment. Interestingly, the reason they give for this is that it would be inconceivable that the particular deeds of the particular souls would be presented to God (so as to judge the particular souls) when He already knows every single deed performed by every individual. See RJ, 2:355-56, 439.
10. VC, pp. 38-39; Siyāṣah, pp. 42-43, 47-48.
11. RIS, 3:339; RJ, 1:51-54, 74-75, 121-23; 2:354-56.
12. When explaining how the spheres move, al-Fārābī writes, in the Political Regime, that it is the "celestial souls" that are responsible for this motion. He, however, follows this by explaining that in the heavenly realm there is really no soul other than the rational soul, that is, the intelligence. In other words, according to the Political Regime, al-Fārābī holds that it is the intelligences that move the spheres. Examine Siyāṣah, pp. 33-34.

13. RIS, 3:189.
14. Fakhry, for example, writes that the Brethren's hierarchical concept is "an anticipation of Darwinian evolution." Fakhry, Islamic Philosophy, p. 173. For a similar opinion, see, Dieterici (F.), Der Darwinismus im X und XI Jahrhundert, Leipzig:1878. De Boer rejects this thesis, asserting that the various realms of nature are connected, according to the Brethren, not by virtue of the bodily structure, but rather by virtue of the structure of the soul. Nasr and al-Fārūqī also refute the claim that the Brethren were the Darwinists of the fourth/tenth century. Thus, they hold that the criterion which the Brethren followed in their ordering of the chain of terrestrial beings is not simply the external physical characteristics, but rather, the interior qualities of these beings and their ontological status. This, they continue, is the reason why the Brethren name the elephant and the horse, rather than the monkey, as the animals closest to man. They rank far higher than the ape because of their fidelity, memory and noble dispositions. See, De Boer, History, p. 91; Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, p. 70; al-Fārūqī, "Ethics," p. 119.
15. Nasr, Cosmological Doctrines, pp. 72-73.
16. RIS, 2:9-11. Note that sometimes the phrase daf'atan wāhidah is used to mean "instantaneously", but not in the above context.
17. This is implicit in the doctrine of the eternity of the process of generation and corruption. See, Aristotle, On Generation and Corruption, ii, 10, 336a, pp. 15-25; this is suggested in a somewhat different context in: Physics, iii, 6, 206a, pp. 25-26.
18. Although, normally, intellectual and moral fulfillment are attained in a virtuous society, al-Fārābī's language suggests certain exceptions, for example when he refers to the state of the virtuous man in a corrupt political regime. See, FM, p. 95; KM, p. 56.

19. It is true that, in the Political Regime, al-Fārābī states that man's ultimate happiness consists of acquiring the stage of the active intellect which he identifies with the "Faithful Spirit" (al-rūh al-amin) and the "Holy Spirit" (al-rūh al-qudus). But this isolated statement cannot be compared with the Brethren's continuous emphasis on relating their epistemology in terms of religious beliefs. See, Siyāṣah, p. 32.
20. KM, pp. 44-45.
21. KM, p. 44.
22. It should be noted that al-Fārābī speaks not only about voluntary evil but about natural evil as well. Natural evil results from the influence of the heavenly bodies. It is not quite clear, however, how the virtuous leader would eliminate natural evil. Al-Fārābī could not be referring to astrology since he repudiates it, maintaining that, unlike astronomy, astrology is not, properly speaking, a science that yields certainty. See, Druart, "Causation," p. 39; Madkour, "al-Fārābī," p. 459. The Brethren, on the other hand, are ardent advocates of astrology. RIS, 1:144. They describe it as a science and attack those who refute it. RIS, 1:144; 4:374. More important is their insistence that the worthy leader, the true viceroy of God, must know this science and must use it in his government. Again, they are not clear as to how he would utilize this science. They declare, however, that the ruler who does not master this science himself and has to resort to astrologers is actually a slave to the astrologers and not a leader. RIS, 4:374ff.
23. RIS, 4:131.
24. RIS, 4:171.
25. TS, p. 91; Attainment, p. 78.
26. KH, p. 131.
27. Siyāṣah, p. 101.

28. FM, p. 66; Aphorisms, p. 50.

29. RJ, 2:392, 394, 397.



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